UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
3 1761 01192648 2

Shaw, William Hudson
George Villiers

DA
391
.1
B9S43

Bequeathed

to

The University of Toronto Library

by

The late Maurice Hutton,
M.A., LL.D.

Principal of University College

1901-1928

HE B
B9234
W8

George Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham.

THE

STANHOPE ESSAY

FOR

1882.

BY

W. HUDSON SHAW,

BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

391574
22.4.41

OXFORD:
B. H. BLACKWELL, 50 BROAD STREET.
LONDON:
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & CO.
1882.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

Omnia fui, nec quicquam habui;
Patriae parens et hostis audio;
Deliciae idem et ludibrium Parlamenti;
Qui dum Papistis bellum infero, insimulor Papista,
Dum Protestantium partibus consulo, occidor a Protsetante.

DA
391
.1
B9S43

INTRODUCTORY.

THE biographies of court favourites are rarely written; and from the point of view of modern philosophical historians, who regard the life of the people, the evolution of ideas, and the progress of nations in civilization, as of supreme importance, the loss is not very great: but the men who were the objects of royal affection in Europe during the earlier part of the seventeenth contury, Cardinal Richelieu, the Count of Olivares, and the Duke of Buckingham, were not only favourites but powerful ministers, and, as such, deserve places in history which are denied to Piers Gaveston and David Rizzio, or even to Sir Walter Raleigh and the Earl of Essex. At a period when, for good or evil, the idiosyncrasies of the sovereign formed the most important factor in a nation's politics, the influence of his chosen companions was not altogether inconsiderable; but when, as happened in the case of the Duke of Buckingham, the king fell entirely under the domination of his creature, who exercised almost regal functions and left the impress of his own individuality upon every state action, the aims and character of the court favourite become a fit subject for historical investigation.

It is customary to explain the fondness of James I for Somerset and Buckingham, who were distinguished by great personal beauty and manly vigour, as being due to the aesthetic element in the Stuart nature, which, in another form, manifested itself in the artistic tastes of Charles I. No doubt there is considerable truth in this; and King James, long before he came to the throne of England, had manifested the same tendency in the cases of Montgomery and Haddington: but the rise of the Earl of Somerset, and still more of George Villiers, was due to other and deeper causes also. By the hard experiences of his youth James had learnt to chafe under the restraints imposed upon his will by great noblemen and councillors of state. It was to free himself from the interference of the Privy Council that he adopted Robert Carr as his confidential adviser and instrument; while Buckingham was intended to relieve the king of all the disagreeable functions of royalty, to spare him the trouble of receiving importunate suitors, to be the medium of communication between James and the government officials, to be moulded by his own ideas and teaching, and, depending solely for his position upon royal favour, to return the king's benefits by devoted attachment and faithful service.

The ministerial portion of Buckingham's career was a time of great crises in religion and politics. It was while he ruled England that the Catholic reaction, which had been inaugurated by the Council of Trent and the foundation of the Society of Jesus, reached its height. Step by step, owing to the selfish aims and anarchical tendencies of many of the Protestant rulers, Southern Germany, France, Brabant and Flanders, returned to the Catholic fold, and the dream of an universal reformation ended in disappointment. In England the effect was great. All hope of toleration vanished, and the Protestants, terrified by the military successes of Tilly and Spinola, by the schemes of James I to marry his son to a Catholic Princess, as well as by the suspension of the laws against the Recusants and the Arminian tendencies of a large section of the English clergy, clamoured anxiously for a thoroughly Protestant policy and grew daily more alienated from the men who seemed bent on playing into the hands of Spain and the Catholics. Once at least in his life Buckingham might have placed himself at the head of the Protestants of England, have set on foot a national policy on the lines of that of Elizabeth, and perhaps have saved the throne of the Stuarts. But he had no strong religious sympathies, and cared neither for Catholics nor Protestants, but only for the carrying out of his own immediate schemes; and with a light heart he lent his assistance at one time to sign away the independence of the English kings in the dishonourable marriage treaty of 1624, while, when it suited his purpose, he did not hesitate to bid for the support of the Protestants by repudiating the obligations into which he had persuaded King Charles to enter.

Buckingham's political life, moreover, was passed amid the first beginnings of that momentous revolution, by which sovereignty in England was transferred from the Crown to Parliament. It could hardly be expected that he, a mere novice in politics, should have discerned what even Bacon failed to see, that the change was rendered inevitable by the rise of the middle and commercial classes, by the progress of new ideas flowing from the Reformation and the revival of learning, and by the absence of all fears of a loss of national independence. At a juncture when the greatest political genius was needed, more delicate and far-sighted than that of Edward I, to effect the change that was coming, by peaceful means, England was governed by kings who were dominated by the idea of Divine right, and by a minister without fixed principles of any kind, who was only too liable to identify the welfare of the nation with his own personal aims. It was the Duke of Buckingham's mission to hasten the downfall of absolutist theories, to prove by repeated disasters abroad, by dissensions between King and Parliament, and by the abuses of prerogative government, that whether or not the House of Commons was a fit instrument of government, the uncontrolled power of a Stuart king, wielded by an irresponsible favourite, was fatal to the best interests of England.

Unlike many of the historical personages of the seventeenth

century, the Duke of Buckingham has not yet been 'white-washed.' When allowance has been made for the exaggerations of bitter opponents, when the evidence of untrustworthy guides, like Sir Anthony Weldon and Roger Coke, has been altogether discarded, and Buckingham is judged by his own words and deeds, the 'prince of favourites' still stands condemned as the worst of English ministers. No ingenuity can excuse the fatal folly of the journey to Madrid, the careless defiance of the wishes of the nation, the unwisdom of a close alliance with France on humiliating terms, and the want of organization and good management which chiefly brought about the failure of the expedition to Cadiz. Buckingham was not quite the hateful minion delineated by the popular leaders, but it is hardly too much to say that to his rashness, impetuosity, and want of statesmanship, was due the first alienation between the Stuarts and the English people.

SECTION I.

EARLY LIFE OF VILLIERS AND RISE AT COURT. 1592–1619.

1592–1619. Parentage and education of Villiers.—Introduction at Court.—Sudden fall of Somerset.—Rise of Villiers.—Dismissal of the Howards.—Created Marquis of Buckingham and Lord Admiral.—Reforms in the Administration.—Marriage with Lady Catherine Manners.

Buckingham's early life.

George Villiers was born on the 20th of August, 1592, and was the younger son, by a second marriage, of Sir George Villiers, a knight of ancient family who owned estates at Brooksby, near Melton Mowbray, and had been High Sheriff of Leicestershire in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. His mother was also of good lineage[1]; but having occupied the position of waiting-woman to her relative, Lady Beaumont of Coleorton, an opportunity was afforded to the future enemies of the Duke of Buckingham of vilifying his descent[2]. Whatever her rank may have been, Lady Villiers was distinguished by great beauty and cleverness, as well as by unbounded ambition and worldly selfishness. Her husband died in 1605; and as he had settled the bulk of his property on the children of his first marriage, his widow was left with a family of three sons and a daughter to subsist on a scanty pittance of 200*l.* a year. The education which she bestowed upon her favourite son, George, was of a somewhat extraordinary character. Having no liking for intellectual studies, and being possessed of a singularly handsome face and a graceful figure, he was merely instructed, first at home, and afterwards during a three years' sojourn in France, in the external accomplishments of a fine gentleman of the period. When he returned from Paris, in 1614, he had acquired a certain fluency in the French language and an exquisite taste in dress, was a skilful fencer and an incomparable dancer. Profession, or aptitude for a profession, he had none. His sole hope of advancement in life was that, like Leicester and Hatton under Elizabeth, and like the reigning favourite, Robert

His education.

[1] Harl. Miscellany, viii. 613. Sir Henry Wotton, the best authority for Buckingham's early life, says that his mother was the daughter of Anthony Beaumont, Esq., of Coleorton. Vide also Wilson. Reign of King James, p. 79.

[2] Roger Coke (Detection of the Court of England, i. 80) declared that Mary Beaumont was a kitchen-maid in the house of the first Lady Villiers, and the story appears to have been countenanced by Mr. Forster (Life of Sir John Eliot, i. 15, note).

Carr, Earl of Somerset, he might, by means of his attractive person and courtier ways, win the goodwill of his sovereign.

First introduction to James. Aug. 1614.

Villiers first came under the notice of King James at Apthorpe, and seems to have created a favourable impression at once. Soon afterwards he appeared at Court, but whether by invitation of the king, or in the hope of obtaining support in his suit for the hand of Sir Roger Aston's daughter, to whom he had become attached, is uncertain. If the latter was his object he was soon induced, by the friendly advice of Sir John Graham[1], acting probably under instructions from the king, to free himself from this entanglement in order not to prejudice his prospects as a courtier.

Position of Somerset.

At this time the Earl of Somerset was at the height of his career. He had, however, many enemies, and a strong opposition had lately been formed against him. Great noblemen like the Earls of Pembroke and Worcester, whose influence as Privy Councillors had, since the rise of Somerset, been entirely destroyed, and rigid Puritans of the type of Archbishop Abbot, who were irritated by the alliance between Somerset and the Roman Catholic family of the Howards, as well as by the peaceful relations with Spain, which the King and the Earl were endeavouring to promote, were ready to combine in any attempt to deprive the favourite of his place in the King's regard. In young Villiers, with his personal advantages and good-natured frank disposition, the opponents of Somerset thought they might find an ally, by whose means it would be possible to ruin the Earl, and restore the Privy Council to its proper place in the government of the kingdom. Lord Clarendon attributes the sudden rise of Villiers solely to his beauty and graceful figure, but it is quite clear that he owed his first advancement at Court in great part also to the efforts made on his behalf by those who were opposed to the system of government by favourites, and were anxious above all things to win back for the Privy Council the functions which it had lost[2]. Pembroke and Abbot expected that in the event of success Villiers would co-operate with them, from gratitude to his benefactors, in their endeavours to persuade James to govern through his Council.

Villiers supported by Privy Councillors.

Rise of Villiers.

In November 1614, the friends of Villiers tried to obtain for him a post in the Bedchamber, but Somerset, who as yet had suffered no diminution of his power, opposed their request, and Villiers only obtained the office of Cupbearer. In the early part of the next year, however, a quarrel took place between James and Somerset, caused chiefly by the latter's outrageous insolence and peevish temper. Abbot and Pembroke were not slow to take advantage of the opportunity, and after considerable opposition[3] on the part of

[1] Harl. Misc. viii. 614.

[2] Gardiner, Hist. of Eng. 1603–1616, ii. 203.

[3] The Queen warned Abbot, 'If this young man be brought in, the first persons he will plague must be you that labour for him. . . The King will teach him to despise and hardly intreat us that he may seem to be beholden to none but himself.' Vide Rushworth's Collections, i. 460.

Villiers knighted.

Queen Anne, the Archbishop persuaded her to lend her indispensable support to the advancement of Villiers. After some hesitation, caused by the intervention of Somerset, the King acceded to the Queen's wishes, and on April 23rd Villiers was made a Gentleman of the Bedchamber, knighted, and enriched with a pension of 1000*l.* a year. Nevertheless, James had no intention of breaking with Somerset, but seems rather to have entertained the notion of retaining both favourites. He is said to have sent Villiers to Somerset to offer his service, and to ask for his patronage. Somerset rejected the overture at once with a scornful defiance. 'I will none of your service,' he told Villiers, 'and you shall none of my favour. I will, if I can, break your neck, and of that be confident[1].'

Fall of Somerset.

The events of the autumn of 1615 entirely altered the relations of the two rivals with James; and before the end of the year Somerset's reputation was ruined for ever, and his power gone. The terrible tragedy of Sir Thomas Overbury's death was brought to light by the disclosures of Helwys, Lieutenant of the Tower, and the King was compelled to bring Somerset and his Countess to trial. Both were found guilty, the Countess confessing her crime, and though ultimately James thought fit, while severely punishing the agents of the murder, to pardon the principals, Somerset and his wife were imprisoned for some years in the Tower, and henceforth disappear with their dark misdeeds from the page of history.

Continued rise of Villiers. 1616–1618.

Villiers stepped at once into the place of Somerset. His patrons, Pembroke and Worcester, became respectively Lord Chamberlain and Lord Privy Seal, while he himself, in January 1616, was promoted by the King to be Master of the Horse[2]. From this time his rise to the highest honours was unprecedentedly rapid. Titles and offices were showered upon him, 'liker main showers,' as Sir Henry Wotton phrases it, 'than sprinkling drops or dews,' by the foolish fondness of James, and without the slightest effort on his own part. In August he was created Viscount Villiers and Baron Blechly[3], and to support his new dignity, estates to the value of 80,000*l.* were granted to him, so that scoffers could no longer reproach the latest Knight of the Garter with his poverty. Before he had been four months a peer, he received an earldom (Jan. 1617). A year later he was Marquis of Buckingham, with an annual income estimated at from 15,000*l.* to 20,000*l.* a year, and

[1] This is on the authority of Weldon (Court of King James), whose unsupported statements are altogether untrustworthy; but Mr. Gardiner accepts this story as probable, because of James's kindness to both Somerset and Villiers at the time.

[2] Carew Papers, 22.

[3] The second title is usually given as Baron Whaddon, but Bacon, who drew out the patent, expressly says, in a letter to the king, 'I have sent Sir George Villiers' patent drawn again, containing also a barony, the name Blechly, which is his own and to my thinking soundeth better than Whaddon.' (Spedding, Life and Letters of Lord Bacon, vi. 7.)

held in addition the offices of Chief Justice in Eyre, Master of the King's Bench, and Constable of Windsor Castle.

His position.

As yet Buckingham did not play an important part in English politics. He had scarcely any share, in spite of the rumours of the time, in the disgrace of Lord Chief Justice Coke, although he is supposed soon after the fall of Somerset to have assisted the anti-Spanish party in obtaining the release of Sir Walter Raleigh. Before Raleigh sailed, however, the new favourite had turned against his patrons, and was working cordially with the Spanish ambassador to bring about a matrimonial alliance with Spain[1]. The time had not yet come when he was to take up an independent position and become one of the chief forces in English political life. For the present he was the king's private secretary and boon companion, the leading spirit in court festivities, and the central figure in the tilting matches and hunting expeditions in which the king took delight, with very considerable influence over him, no doubt, and rapidly acquiring a complete supremacy with the Prince of Wales.

Character at this time.

In after days, amid the bitter party conflicts that heralded the Great Rebellion, the most conflicting opinions were expressed as to the real character of this favourite of two kings of England; but during the first two or three years of his rise at Court we meet with an almost universal laudation of Buckingham from men of every party. Not only eulogists like Clarendon and Sir Henry Wotton, personal friends such as Archbishop Abbot and Lord Bacon, but even bigoted Puritans of the stamp of Sir Symonds D'Ewes[2] testify to the courtesy and gentle demeanour, the open, generous disposition, which won the hearts of all men. We may readily believe that there must have been some extraordinary attraction about Buckingham in addition to his merely physical advantages. It is only just too, in the case of a man who has been visited with such wholesale and indiscriminate censure, to bear in mind that before the foolish fondness of James had turned his head, he was found refusing to build his fortunes on the ruins of his predecessors by accepting the Sherborne estate[3], and, though the times were corrupt, disdaining to do that which Salisbury had done without scruple in becoming a pensioner of Spain[4]. A sordid love of gain, however, was never characteristic of Buckingham. With a princely income, and profitable offices thrust upon him daily, he could afford to follow his natural inclinations and rise above the gross venality of the age. As might be expected, his chief fault was extreme vanity. He wished to become the sole channel of patronage in England, to have learned chancellors, expert diplomatists, and able statesmen pay their court to him and obey his nod, to have every important

[1] It was in accordance with this change of front that Buckingham refused, after Raleigh's return, to intercede for him.

[2] Vide Autobiography of Sir Symonds D'Ewes, p. 167, and Sir John Eliot, i. 40.

[3] Court and Times of James I, i. 431.

[4] Gardiner, Prince Charles and the Spanish Marriage, i. 34.

office as well as the subordinate posts of government filled by his nominees. It was this ambition which brought him into collision with the Howards.

Fall of the Howards. 1618.

The members of the Howard family had been the intimate allies of the Earl of Somerset, were the ardent supporters of peaceful relations with Spain, and at this period occupied some of the most important offices in the State. The octogenarian Earl of Nottingham, better known as Lord Howard of Effingham, who had been Lord Admiral when the Armada was defeated, still held the post for which he was so little fitted. The head of the family, Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk, was Lord Treasurer; his son-in-law Wallingford, was Master of Wards. The Secretary of State, Sir Thoms Lake, and the Attorney-General, Yelverton, were his creatures. It could hardly have been expected that the new favourite would be amicably disposed to Somerset's friends, and, bent as he was on gaining complete control over the administration, he was not likely to acquiesce in the continuance in important posts of men who refused to swim with the tide and solicit his patronage. A conflict must have arisen sooner or later, but the Howard faction precipitated the quarrel by endeavouring to supplant Buckingham in James's favour, through the agency of a good-looking youth, the son of Sir William Monson[1]. The attempt was entirely unsuccessful. James replied to it by new marks of affection, and bestowed upon Buckingham a lease of the Irish customs, worth from 2000*l.* to 3000*l.* a year. At a magnificent banquet given by Buckingham to Prince Charles shortly afterwards, the King showed his intentions very decidedly, and drank to the health of the Villiers family. 'I desire,' he said, 'to advance it above all others. Of myself, I have no doubt, for I live to that end; and I hope that my posterity will so far regard their father's commandments and instructions, as to advance that house above all others whatever[2].' Unhappily for his posterity, the King's hope was only too literally fulfilled.

Encouraged by the King's attitude towards him, Buckingham proceeded to retaliate upon his opponents. On July 19th the Earl of Suffolk was charged with bribery and malpractices, of which, like most other officials of the time, he had been guilty[3], and was ordered to resign the Treasurer's staff. About the same time, the Secretary, Sir Thomas Lake, became involved in some disgraceful transactions connected with the libels of his daughter, Lady Roos, against Lady Exeter. Proceedings having been instituted in the Court of Star Chamber, it appeared that Lake had abused the privileges of his office, and had committed two persons

[1] Great efforts were made by the Suffolk family to gain James's favour for Monson. According to Mr. Chamberlain 'they made account to rise and recover their fortunes by setting up this new idol, and took great pains in tricking and pranking him up, besides washing his face every day with posset-curds.' (Court and Times, ii. 70.)

[2] Ibid. ii. 79.

[3] State Papers Domestic, James I, xcviii. 70.

to prison who had refused to give evidence in support of his daughter's case. He was condemned to lose his post, to pay a fine of 10,000*l.*, and to be imprisoned during the King's pleasure. No offence could be found with which to charge Wallingford, whose character was beyond reproach, but he had taken part in the introduction of young Monson to Court, and received a hint that his services were no longer required. At first, confident of his integrity, Wallingford resisted and demanded an inquiry into his conduct, but finding that opposition was useless, he resigned his office under a promise of compensation. At the end of the year the Lord Admiral's turn came, when the Commission which had been appointed to inquire into the state of the navy presented a report, in which, owing to the neglect of the higher officials, and the corruption of their subordinates, the frightful disorder and inefficiency prevailing in the department of naval affairs stood revealed. It was found that of the forty-three vessels of the royal navy, more than one half were in a sinking condition, while many of the rest were not fit to sail from London to Plymouth, although the sum of 60,000*l.* had been spent on the navy year by year[1]. Everywhere there was peculation, neglect, and mismanagement, so gross and palpable, that Nottingham at last resigned his office. In Jan. 1619 Buckingham, who had already refused to fill his place on the ground of inexperience[2], became Lord High Admiral of England, and stepped from the position of a favourite and dispenser of royal patronage to that of a powerful minister. With the exception of the Attorney-General, not a dependent of Somerset or the Howards remained in office, and Buckingham was left without a rival.

State of the Navy revealed by a Commission.

Buckingham made Lord Admiral.

These changes were followed by a marked improvement in the state of the national finances and the administration of the navy. Year after year, owing to the King's prodigality and the corruption of his ministers, there had been a deficit in the revenue. In 1618 for the first time there was a surplus. In the navy, while the expenditure was reduced from 60,000*l.* to 30,000*l.*[3], ships that required repairs were rendered seaworthy, and two new vessels added every year[4]. The King was delighted, and attributed the improvement to the energy inspired into every department of government by Buckingham[5]. It is difficult to determine exactly from the evidence which has reached us how far Buckingham deserves credit for the reforms which were carried out during the later years of James's reign, but the retrenchment in the expenditure seems to have been almost entirely due to the careful thrift and business capacity of Lionel Cranfield, afterwards Lord Treasurer, while the reforms in the navy were carried out by a Commission appointed

Buckingham as an administrator.

[1] Gardiner, Spanish Marriage, vol. i. 174.
[2] Rushworth's Collections, i. 382.
[3] State Papers Domestic, cxii. 100; cxxxvii. 6.
[4] Ibid. cxx. 142; cxxvii. 144.
[5] Vide King's Speech in opening Parliament of 1621; Rushworth, i. 22.

immediately after Buckingham became Lord Admiral[1], of which Sir John Coke was the most active member[2]. The events of later years proved conclusively that Buckingham was wanting in the essential qualities of an administrator. His sole merit appears to have been that, unlike the man whom he had supplanted, he allowed his subordinates to do the work, while he himself received the credit.

Aggrandisement of the Villiers family.

The promise that King James had made to advance the whole Villiers family was faithfully carried out. Buckingham's mother, now Lady Compton, became Countess of Buckingham[3] in her own right, and brought great discredit on her son by using his influence for the aggrandisement of her tribe of relations. The eldest son, John, was created Viscount Purbeck, while Buckingham's young brother Christopher[4], and his half-brother Sir Edward Villiers, were endowed with pensions from the profits of Crown monopolies. It soon became universally known also, that although Buckingham himself was free from the love of gain, his kindred were by no means inaccessible to bribes. The scandals which resulted from this, fill up a large portion of the domestic history of these years. Sir Robert Naunton, for instance, obtained his post as Secretary by making Christopher Villiers heir to land, worth 500*l.* a year. Cranfield, who was looked upon as one of the rising men of the day, was obliged to gain Buckingham's favour, and proclaim his subserviency, by deserting the woman he loved, and marrying Anne Brett, a portionless kinswoman of the Countess of Buckingham[5]. Perhaps the most disgraceful example of the evils of favouritism, however, was seen in the transactions connected with Baron Purbeck's marriage to the daughter of Sir Edward Coke, the disgraced Chief Justice. After some haggling over terms, Coke had agreed to the match, and had promised to give his daughter a dowry of 10,000*l.* in the hope of being restored to favour at Court, but Lord Keeper Bacon opposed the marriage, and for some time was in danger of losing his place owing to Buckingham's resentment[6]. Eventually, in spite of the reluctance of the heiress herself to marry a man who was weak in mind and body, all obstacles were overcome, and the marriage took place, only to end in a tragedy almost as shameful as that of the Countess of Somerset.

Buckingham's marriage. 1620.

Buckingham's own marriage was brought about in a way no less extraordinary than his brother's. The Countess of Buckingham having for some time devoted her energies to obtaining a suitable

[1] State Papers Dom., cv. 12.

[2] It seems probable on the whole that it is to Sir John Coke that the credit of the restoration of the navy really belongs. Vide Goodman's Court of King James, i. 308.

[3] Court and Times, ii. 84. She refused to allow her husband to share in her elevation, much to the bewilderment of the heralds.

[4] Created Earl of Anglesea in 1623.

[5] S. P. Dom. cix. 59; cxii. 20.

[6] Spedding, Life and Letters of Lord Bacon, vi. 5.

wife for her son, had made choice of the Lady Catherine Manners, daughter of the Earl of Rutland, one of the wealthiest and proudest of the English nobility. As far as the wishes of the lady herself were concerned the prospect was favourable, for it was no secret that she was passionately attached to Buckingham. But there were two great obstacles in the way of the marriage. Lady Katherine was a strict Roman Catholic, and the King refused to allow his favourite to marry the daughter of a recusant, while the Earl of Rutland was by no means willing to accede to the Countess of Buckingham's exorbitant demands in the matter of his daughter's dowry. During the year 1619, therefore, the negotiations for the match did not make much progress, and at one time it was rumoured that they had been broken off altogether. On the death of the Earl of Rutland's son, however, the difficulty about marriage settlements vanished, and by the adroit management of one of the most remarkable men of the time, John Williams[1], a royal chaplain, who by the King's advice had attached himself to Buckingham, Lady Catherine was induced to listen to the arguments on behalf of Protestantism, and to profess herself a convert. The Earl of Rutland was irritated beyond measure at this attempt to change his daughter's faith, and an unpleasant incident which occurred while he was chafing under the prospect of her becoming a heretic, threatened to end in a serious quarrel with Buckingham. With the design probably of completing Lady Catherine's conversion by removing her from the influence of her family, the Countess of Buckingham induced her future daughter-in-law to visit her. Owing, it is said, to an attack of illness, Lady Catherine passed the night in the apartments of her hostess; and the Earl of Rutland, professing to believe that his daughter had compromised her honour refused to receive her back, and wrote a furious letter to Buckingham demanding that the marriage should take place at once.[2] Buckingham resented the angry nobleman's imputations, and declaring that Lady Catherine's fame was in no danger except from her father's tongue, announced that for himself he had no intention of entering upon the alliance. He was not sincere in his resolve, and though for a few weeks there was great coolness between him and Rutland, eventually the quarrel was healed, and on May 16th, 1620, the marriage took place privately, the King and the Earl of Rutland alone being present at the ceremony.

Buckingham was more fortunate than he deserved to be in the wife who had been wooed so strangely. The Duchess of Buck-

[1] For his services in this matter Williams was made Dean of Westminster, and afterwards became Bishop of Lincoln and Lord-Keeper. (Hacket's Life, i. 43.)

[2] For the letters vide Goodman's Court of King James, ii. 190, 191. The truth of this extraordinary episode in Buckingham's life is not easy to be discovered. Wilson (History, p. 149) alleges that Lady Catherine was abducted by the Duke of Buckingham, but his story may be safely set aside. It is certain that she stayed with the Countess, but whether by accident or from design, is matter for conjecture.

ingham was one of the few women of rank of the time whose gentleness and womanly tenderness, devotion and purity of life, were conspicuous in the midst of the almost universal corruption and immorality of the Court. No scandal was ever breathed against her name, and the worst that was ever said of her was that by her influence she at one time nearly persuaded her husband to become a Roman Catholic, she herself having returned to her own faith soon after her marriage. Though her heart was almost broken [1] by Buckingham's flagrant infidelities, which are only too well authenticated, his Duchess continued to the end of his life to lavish upon him the most devoted affection, making his happiness the chief end of her existence.

[1] Goodman's Court of King James, ii. 310–11.

SECTION II.

BUCKINGHAM CHIEF FAVOURITE AND MINISTER. 1619–1623.

Importance of foreign politics.—Early negotiations for a marriage treaty with Spain.—The Bohemian Revolution and the invasion of the Palatinate.—Parliament of 1621.—Buckingham and the Monopolists.—Disgrace of Lord Chancellor Bacon.—Renewed overtures for a marriage with the Infanta of Spain.—The journey to Madrid.

State of England.

From the time when Buckingham became Lord Admiral and began to figure as minister as well as favourite, the main interest of English politics was centered on foreign affairs. There had been, it is true, a bitter constitutional struggle, but for the present the conflict was suspended, King James having been left master of the field. He was able, after 1614, to collect customs-duties without the consent of Parliament, to grant monopolies, to deprive the judges of their independence, and representatives of the nation of their liberty. Yet on the whole the country was quiet. The times were prosperous. Landlords found their rents everywhere rising, merchants were constantly discovering new markets for English goods and improvements in their manufacture; so that James's hardly concealed despotism excited discontent only in the breasts of a small knot of patriots. The struggle between King and Parliament during the latter part of his reign, which James bequeathed to his son, the odium into which the monarchy fell, the transient popularity of Buckingham, and his subsequent fall in the favour of the people, are all to be traced to the foreign policy of England; and it is hardly possible to estimate the merits or demerits of Buckingham's political conduct without some reference to the relations with continental governments, especially with Spain, which led to the celebrated journey to Madrid in 1623, and its long train of consequences.

New attitude of Spain.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century it had become clear that the scheme of universal monarchy for Spain, which had been the dream of Philip II, had ended in failure. He had hoped by military conquest to re-establish the Catholic religion throughout the world, and to revive in his own person the faded glories of the Imperial crown. The magnificence of the plan was hardly greater than the difficulty of its execution, and when Philip II died the security of England and the independence of the Netherlands were almost assured. Under Philip III and his favourite Lerma, a pacific policy was followed, and it might have been supposed that

Aim of the Spanish foreign policy.

the far-reaching plans of the previous generation had been finally abandoned. But it was not so. The ministers of Spain still cherished fondly the traditional scheme of bringing back all European nations into the bosom of the true Church, of which Spain was the chief pillar and support. This design still formed the basis of their foreign policy; the means only, by which it was to be accomplished, were altered. Henceforth Spain would cease to make open war upon Protestant powers, or to stir up disaffected Catholic subjects against their sovereigns. She would endeavour instead to win over the sovereigns themselves by diplomatic agencies, by supporting them, if need were, against their people, and by matrimonial alliances. The dictum of Charles V, 'Cujus regio, ejus religio' was, in the opinion of the Spanish ministers, still applicable even to England. They imagined that if only the conversion of the King of England could be brought about, the conversion of the kingdom would follow. Throughout the whole of the dealings of the Spaniards with James, two fundamental errors vitiated their policy. They overrated the power and strength of the King himself, and they had no conception whatever of the intensely Protestant spirit of the great majority of the English people.

Early negotiations for marriage alliance.

Since the Peace of London in 1604, negotiations for a matrimonial alliance between Spain and England had been carried on at various intervals, but it was not until 1611 when James had quarrelled with his subjects and dissolved Parliament, that they assumed any serious importance. When he instructed his ambassador to make proposals for a marriage between Prince Henry and the Infanta of Spain, he was answered that her hand had been already promised to the King of France, but the Duke of Lerma was willing to agree to a match with her younger sister on condition that the Prince became a Catholic. This led James to break off the negotiation and to ally himself with the Protestant powers. Proposals were made to Henry IV of France that Prince Henry should marry his daughter, who was to be educated as a Protestant, while James's only daughter, the Lady Elizabeth, married Frederic V, the Elector Palatine, head of the Protestant princes of Germany. It was now hoped in England that James would return to the policy of Elizabeth of hostility to Spain, and preparations for war with that country were begun. James and Lerma, however, were inclined to peace, and the danger passed away, partly through the diplomatic skill of the new Spanish ambassador, Diego Sarmiento D'Acuña. In 1614 James once more drew nearer to Spain. His Parliament, made angry by an attempt of the courtiers to control it by means of the 'Undertakers,' opened the session by a statement of grievances, referring chiefly to the illegal customs and to monoplies. James refused to listen, and dissolved Parliament before it had transacted any business, having resolved to enter upon a close alliance with Spain. It is difficult to understand what he expected to gain by so doing, beyond a temporary relief from his financial

Parliament of 1614.

difficulties by the rich dowry of the Infanta, but James had always been attracted by the supposed inexhaustible resources, the splendid army, and the absolute government of the Spanish monarchy. The explanation seems to be that in his hatred of Parliamentary control, which was intensely strong and often his ruling motive, he clutched vaguely at any hope of saving himself from the necessity of summoning Parliament. He now turned for assistance to Sarmiento. This man, better known as Count Gondomar, was one of the ablest of the many skilful diplomatists of Spain, and was pre-eminently fitted for the post of ambassador to James. He was a brilliant conversationalist, and was equally fitted to compliment Buckingham or to engage in serious talk with the King on the thousand subjects in which he delighted to display his learning. In knowledge of character and intuitive tact, Gondomar had no superior. His influence over James, however, was chiefly due to his strength of will, his assumption of superiority, and his unwavering belief in himself, the power of Spain, and the claims of the Roman Catholic Church. As a statesman Gondomar made great mistakes, for like other Spanish politicians he never understood, in spite of his long residence in England, how firm a hold Protestantism had taken of the hearts and intellects of the English people. He felt confident that if the Catholic religion were allowed fair play, if the Penal Laws were relaxed or abolished, the nation would return to the old faith, and if England became Catholic he knew that the ruin of Protestantism on the Continent would follow. No diplomatist ever laboured under a more complete delusion, but Gondomar was probably misled by the reaction against extreme Calvinism which had lately taken place in England. On one point, however, he was not deceived. He did not believe, like Philip III and Lerma, that James would ever consent to his son's conversion. But Spain had certain advantages to offer, in exchange for which Gondomar hoped to see the priests set free from prison, and the penalties for Recusancy suspended. If this were obtained he was sanguine as to the results that would follow. He wrote therefore to Philip, urging him to consent to a marriage treaty on moderate conditions, and painted a glowing picture of the conversion of England and the blessings that would flow from it. The Pope was entirely opposed to the marriage scheme, but a Council of Theologians at Madrid voted in favour of it, and negotiations were again set on foot through the agency of Digby, the English ambassador in Spain. By far the ablest of James's servants, honest and devoted, uninfluenced by the arts of Spanish diplomatists, Digby at first had protested against any close alliance with Spain on the grounds that the King should rely on the support of his own subjects, and that while the advantages to be gained were small, a marriage with a Catholic princess would eventually make repressive measures towards the Catholics in England a matter of necessity. He was prepared, nevertheless, to obey the King's

Count Gondomar.

His idea of the policy to be pursued.

Negotiations of Digby.

First Articles.

wishes and at the beginning of 1615 was engaged in unofficial negotiations with the Duke of Lerma. In April he forwarded to England the conditions demanded by the Spanish Court. It was stipulated in these not only that the Penal Laws should be relaxed, but that the children of the marriage should be educated by their mother, baptized as Catholics, and not be excluded from the throne, if on coming of age they chose to remain Catholics. The Infanta must have a chapel, and the ecclesiastics attending her must be allowed to wear their priestly habits in public, while her household was to be entirely composed of Catholics. After some hesitation James told Sarmiento that with some modifications he would agree to these articles as a basis of negotiations. In August 1617 Digby sailed for Spain to proceed with the treaty, only to find that the Spaniards, whose chief object was to amuse the King of England with overtures in order to prevent him concluding an alliance with France, had raised their demands. They had no desire for the marriage unless there was some prospect that the Catholic Church would gain by it, and accordingly they now demanded the complete abrogation of the Penal Laws, and freedom of worship for the Catholics. James declared that though he was willing by the exercise of his royal prerogative to alleviate the condition of his Catholic subjects, it was not in his power to remove the laws against the Recusants from the Statute Book. In May 1618 therefore the negotiation was suspended.

Suspension of negotiations.

When it was again renewed, it was under entirely new circumstances. In 1618 the long-smouldering elements of discord between Catholics and Protestants in Germany were fanned into a flame by the revolution which took place in Bohemia, where the Protestant nobles, supported by the populace, rose in rebellion and overthrew the government of the Emperor Matthias, which was replaced by that of Protestant Directors. On the death of the Emperor soon afterwards, the Bohemians refused to acknowledge the Archduke Ferdinand of Styria, who had been elected King of Bohemia during the lifetime of Matthias, and was now chosen Emperor. In his place the Bohemian Protestants chose Frederic the Elector Palatine to be their king, relying on his position as head of the Protestant Union, and his relationship to the King of England. It rested with James whether his son-in-law should accept the proffered crown with all its attendant dangers, and unhappily at this juncture James, wavering between his desire to aggrandize his family and his terror of countenancing rebellious subjects, gave an answer so equivocal that, while afterwards he was able to declare that the Elector had acted on his own responsibility, Frederic considered that his father-in-law would support him, and in October 1619 he was crowned at Prague. Spain and Austria united their forces against the usurper, and the Palatinate was on the point of being invaded, when James was appealed to for help by the Protestant Union. The King refused to support Frederic until he withdrew his claim to Bohemia, and in spite of

The Bohemian Revolution.

Conduct of James.

the greatest excitement in England, he would do no more than allow a regiment of volunteers under Sir Horace Vere to defend the Palatinate. It is a proof that James was at this time the sole director of the policy of England, that both the Marquis of Buckingham and Prince Charles were eager for war. James had again fallen completely under the sway of Gondomar, and in order to prevent his interference in Germany the marriage treaty was resumed, Gondomar promising to advance 150,000*l.* of the Infanta's dowry as soon as the articles were signed. The conditions now demanded were much more moderate than those of 1618, for the Spanish ministers were anxious to cajole the King for the time, and had no intention that the marriage should ever take place. James, on the other hand, was more anxious than ever for the match, and when during the summer of 1620 Spinola invaded the Palatinate and possessed himself of most of the territory step by step, he still imagined that he could obtain his wishes by pacific means. If Prince Charles married the Infanta and Spain became his close ally, pressure would be brought to bear upon the Emperor, and peace might be restored to Germany. James ignored the fact that all the interests of the King of Spain were bound up with the success of the Catholics, and the predominance of the House of Austria.

Invasion of the Palatinate.

Spinola's sudden invasion of the Palatinate showed James that he had been duped by Gondomar, and at once he made a public declaration that though he would maintain strict neutrality so far as Bohemia was concerned, he would not permit Frederic to be deprived of his hereditary dominions without striking a blow in his defence. His change of attitude was received with acclamation by his Council, and caused great rejoicings amongst the people, who were wildly excited by the news from Germany. It was a favourable moment to demand help from Protestant England, and a Parliament was summoned to meet in the following January. During the months that elapsed before it assembled, the cause of the Elector rapidly declined. In October the crash came, when the titular King of Bohemia, supported only by incompetent commanders and a disorganised mob of soldiers, without military qualifications himself or the ability to adopt a statesmanlike policy during a critical time, was utterly routed by the Bavarians and Imperialists at the battle of Prague, which was speedily followed by the overthrow of the Protestant aristocracy, the re-establishment of the Austrian government, and the return of the Jesuits. While the news of this disaster caused the deepest distress to Prince Charles, and intense excitement amongst the nation, King James received it with considerable equanimity, thinking that it would at last be possible for him to defend the Palatinate without countenancing his son-in-law's aggressions in Bohemia, and the rebellion of subjects against their lawful sovereign.

1620. Change in the views of James.

Overthrow of Frederic of Bohemia.

When Parliament met on January 30th, the King made a long speech in which, after reminding the Commons that he had received

Meeting of Parliament, 1621.

no supply from them for ten years and that his expenditure could no longer be considered extravagant[1], he spoke of the wretched state of Christendom and the danger of Protestantism abroad. He intended if possible to protect his children's dominions by peaceful means, but if he failed he would spend himself and his crown in an attempt to defend the Palatinate by war. To enable him to treat with sword in hand, the Commons must give him money. James's declaration was likely to meet with a ready response. No Parliament more loyal, more anxious to do its utmost against the encroachments of the Catholics on the Continent, could have been hoped for. Unfortunately, at this crisis, the fundamental difference between the King's view of the functions of the House of Commons and that entertained by themselves, prevented all united action in foreign affairs.

Inquiry into the system of monopolies.

The Parliament was not slow to avail itself of the King's invitation to reform the grievances of the nation. No sooner had the Commons testified their desire to aid the King on the Continent by an immediate grant of two subsidies, than they proceeded to inquire into the abuses connected with patents and monopolies[2], which had for a long time caused bitter complaints. With these the Marquis of Buckingham's name was connected, for although he did not derive any income from the monopolies himself, his half-brother, Sir Edward Villiers, was interested in the patent for the manufacture of gold and silver thread, while Christopher Villiers had received a grant of 800*l.* a year arising from the profits. Great difficulty was experienced in preventing unlicensed persons from engaging in the trade, and Lord Bacon, who from a mistaken idea of their commercial value had supported the monopolies, wrote to Buckingham to recommend that this patent, and all others to which objection was made, should be called in[3]. Buckingham rejected this wise counsel, and showed his determination to support his relatives by causing the dismissal of the Attorney-General Yelverton, who had never cordially accepted his rule and had lately given offence by disapproving of the monopolies held by the favourite's dependants. But when the House of Commons began to attack two of the chief monopolists, Sir Francis Michell and Sir Giles Mompesson, who was a creature of his own, Buckingham, aware of the strong opposition against him in the House of Lords,

Buckingham's conduct regarding them.

[1] Proceedings and Debates of the House of Commons, vol. i. 7. James stated that by the recent reforms a saving of 145,000*l.* a year had been effected in his expenditure. This he attributed to Buckingham. 'Herein such was the love of my young Admiral to me that he took the envy of all upon him for my sake; and though he be but young, yet I find him true in faith and an honest man, and have had the better success in all that he hath taken in hand. He took under himself divers commissioners, as a young commander should do, the better to preserve himself from envy; and yet sought no reward but my good and service; yet nevertheless went through with it with great diligence and good success.'

[2] Proceedings and Debates, i. 64.

[3] Spedding's Life, vol. vi. p. 148.

and rightly perceiving that a blow was being aimed at himself, suddenly changed front, and explained in the House of Lords that he had always understood that the monopolies were beneficial, and if they were not, the committee of Referees who had reported in their favour ought to be called to account[1]. The Commons accordingly demanded an inquiry into the conduct of the Referees, of whom Lord Bacon was one, and laid a series of charges against them before the House of Lords. Buckingham now became more alarmed than ever, particularly as his own downfall was popularly supposed to be the next step; and after a vain attempt to induce James to dissolve Parliament he turned to Dean Williams for advice. Williams counselled him to keep peace with the Parliament and to abandon the monopolists[2]. Soon afterwards, at a conference of the two Houses, Buckingham coolly threw over his brothers and dependants[3], and succeeded in averting the attack on himself. The Commons withdrew their charges against the principal authors of the patents, and contented themselves with a Bill against monopolies and sentence upon Michell and Mompesson. But though Buckingham saved himself, he was unable to prevent the fall of Lord Chancellor Bacon, which followed close upon the disclosures connected with the monopolies. Early in March a petition was presented by the Commons charging Bacon with bribery and malpractices, and after further inquiries he was impeached before the House of Lords. At first the Lord Chancellor believed that he was merely being attacked for his share in the monopolies, and appealed for help to Buckingham, to whose interests he had from the first attached himself, giving him advice in political matters and, with the exception of Baron Purbeck's marriage, invariably following his lead. For a time Buckingham bent all his energies to the support of his friend, visiting him daily in his sickness and vainly pressing upon the King the necessity of a dissolution of Parliament. But James was never disposed to shield from punishment any one proved guilty of actual crime, and beyond all doubt, however pure Bacon's intentions may have been, he had received money from suitors while the cases were still pending, and had corrupted the very source of justice. Buckingham was obliged to confess that he could not be sorry for the Chancellor's disgrace,

Advice of Williams.

Buckingham abandons the monopolies.

Fall of Lord Bacon.

[1] Commons' Journals, i. 557. Buckingham was reported to have said, 'The matter passed the Referees, who have done the wrong that is done.' He repudiated Mompesson. Vide Lords' Journals, iii. 34. 'The Lord Admiral declared openly how much he had been wronged and abused by this offender, Sir Giles Mompesson.'

[2] 'Follow this Parliament in their undertakings,' said Williams. 'Swim with the tide, and you cannot be drowned. . . . Those empty fellows, Mompesson and Michell, let them be made victims of the public wrath. Cast all monopolies into the Dead Sea after them.' Hacket, p. 50.

[3] Proceedings and Debates, i. 150. Buckingham declared that he could not protect either of his two brothers, but tell both his Majesty and the House the truth of that business if that there be need, or they be blamed, and so leave them to the censure of the House: 'for he that begot them begot one also that would punish them if they deserved it.' Vide also Court and Times, ii. 238.

for it had been richly deserved. Nevertheless he appealed to the Lords to attribute Bacon's offence 'to the corruption of the time in respect of the quality of the person.' It was useless to try to defend the man who had himself been driven to acknowledge his crime and to throw himself upon the mercy of his judges. When, however, the Lords passed upon him a severe sentence, condemning him to pay a fine of 40,000*l*, to be imprisoned during the King's pleasure, and to be disabled from sitting in Parliament or holding any office under the crown, Buckingham alone protested[1]. He seems throughout to have done his best to save the Lord Chancellor, and the theory that he was at the bottom of Bacon's disgrace is altogether incredible.

Sentence opposed by Buckingham.

Buckingham and Yelverton.

Buckingham had not yet succeeded in silencing the Attorney General, Yelverton, who had been committed to the Tower. Brought up to be examined by the House of Lords on the subject of monopolies, he declared that it was because of his opposition to the proceedings of the monopolists, that he had been deprived of his office by Buckingham, who stood 'ever at His Majesty's hand, ready to hew him down.' Then, amidst great excitement, Yelverton boldly defied the favourite. 'Howbeit,' he said, 'I dare say if my Lord of Buckingham had but read the Articles exhibited in this place against Hugh Spenser, and had known the danger of placing and displacing officers about a King, he would not have pursued me with such bitterness.' The Lords were by no means favourably disposed to Buckingham, but they refused to listen to such language as this, and Yelverton's speech was interrupted. Buckingham however, who never shrank from answering his opponents, bade him proceed. 'He that will stop him,' he said, 'is more my enemy than his.' Yelverton professed himself ready to prove his charge that the blame of the monopolies rested with Buckingham. Though there was a general feeling amongst the Lords that the accusation was substantially true, Yelverton had no legal proof; and as the King thought himself injured by the reference to Hugh Spenser, the late Attorney General was sentenced to pay a fine of 10,000 marks to the King, and 5,000 to Buckingham, and to be imprisoned during the royal pleasure. Satisfied with his victory, the favourite displayed his usual generosity to a vanquished enemy, and forgave the fine.

Success of the Imperialists in Germany.

The first part of the session of 1621, which had been entirely occupied with domestic reforms, came to an end on June 4th, when James directed an adjournment. Before Parliament met again in November, the Elector Palatine had been placed under the ban of the Empire by the Emperor Ferdinand, the Protestant Union had been dissolved, and all chances of peace had been destroyed by the ravages of Frederic's general, Count Ernest of Mansfield, in the teeth of which, combined with Frederic's determination to assert his claims to Bohemia, all the King of England's attempts at

[1] When the question was put, all agreed, 'Lord Admiral dissentiente.' (Debates of the House of Lords, 1621, p. 64).

mediation were unavailing. The Upper Palatinate had been overrun by the troops of Maximilian of Bavaria, and only three towns remained in Frederic's possession, Heidelberg, Mannheim, and Frankenthal being garrisoned by the English troops. At last James abandoned his vacillating policy, sent immediate supplies to Frederic, and summoned Parliament in order to obtain further grants for a warlike policy. On November 26th a great debate took place in the House of Commons on the question of supply. Again, unhappily, James asked for money without disclosing his policy, and he had given cause for suspicion that he still meditated an alliance between the Prince of Wales and the Spanish Infanta. The Commons knew that it was by the help of Spanish troops and money that the Palatinate had been invaded, and ignorant of the fact that the intentions of Spain had been pacific and that she had only been compelled to interfere by the conduct of Frederic and Mansfield, they cried out for war against the chief enemy of Protestantism. A subsidy was granted for the defence of the Palatinate, but within a few days the Commons had drawn up the famous petition which brought about the dissolution of Parliament. In it they besought the King not only to gather round him the Protestant States on the Continent, but to 'let the point of his sword be against that prince who first diverted and hath since maintained the war in the Palatinate,' to enforce the laws against the Recusants, and to marry the Prince of Wales to one of his own religion. In great anger James wrote to the Speaker, before the petition was presented, to censure the House for this unwarrantable interference with his prerogative, and to tell its members that they were not to meddle with matters of government, or with mysteries of state. The King thought himself 'very free and able to punish any man's misdemeanours in Parliament, and threatened to use his power with no sparing hand. After this, there was no longer any hope of measures being arranged for the active prosecution of a war for the defence of the Palatinate. On December 18th, the Commons entered upon their journals a firm protestation of their right of freedom of speech and immunity from arrest, as well as a declaration that 'the arduous and urgent affairs concerning the King, state, and defence of the realm, and of the Church of England, are proper subjects and matter of counsel and debate in Parliament.' With his own hands James tore the protestation from the journals, and, although the subsidy act had not yet been passed, dissolved Parliament. As in 1614, the King having quarrelled with the House of Commons, threw himself unreservedly into the arms of Spain. 'It is certain,' wrote Gondomar at this time, 'that the King will never summon another Parliament as long as he lives, or at least not another composed as this one was. It is the best thing that has happened in the interests of Spain and the Catholic religion since Luther began to preach heresy a hundred years ago. The King will no longer be able to succour his son-in-law, or to hinder the advance of the Catholics.'

The Commons wish for war against Spain.

Quarrel with James.

Dissolution of Parliament.

James reverts to the Spanish Alliance.

There was no longer any hope that James would be able to interfere by force of arms in Germany, and he again returned to the old useless policy of mediation in reliance upon the assistance of Spain, whose friendship was to be secured by a matrimonial alliance. With this end in view Digby was despatched to Madrid and received from the new king, Philip IV, satisfactory assurances that the marriage was desired by the Spanish court. Gondomar, who had been recalled from England, was strongly in favour of the match, and at Madrid little opposition seemed likely to arise, but a messenger from Rome arrived in England in August, bringing new conditions, to which James could hardly consent. These required that the Infanta should have a church open to all, that her priests were to be freed from all subjection to the laws of England, and that the Infanta should have the care of her children until the age of twelve for the girls, and fourteen for the boys. James declined to concede more than he had already done, and informed Digby that unless his letter of August 1620, was accepted as a basis for negotiations within two months, the treaty must be abandoned. The Marquis of Buckingham, at the same time, wrote to Gondomar to remonstrate, pointing out the relief which had been afforded to the Catholics in England, and the danger in which they would be placed if the match came to nothing. 'Your friends,' he wrote, 'are all discomfited with this long delay, your enemies are exasperated and irritated thereby, and your enemies that envy the felicity of both kings have the more leisure to invent new plots for the cross and hindrance of this happy business; and for the part of your true friend and servant, Buckingham, I have become odious already, and counted a betrayer both of king and country.' Soon afterwards the news arrived of the interviews which Digby had had with the Spanish ministers, from which it appeared that they did not approve of the additions to the articles which had been made by the Pope. Bristol was assured, moreover, that Philip IV disliked the extreme lengths to which the Emperor was proceeding in the Palatinate, and would if necessary assist James with his forces in order to compel negotiations for peace. In December a special messenger, Endymion Porter, brought from Madrid the amended articles proposed by the Spanish ministers. It was now asked that the Infanta might have charge of her children until the age of nine, that her household might be exempted from secular jurisdiction, and that the Catholics should be allowed the free exercise of their religion in their own houses. To these conditions James agreed, and the negotiation had reached this stage when the folly of Buckingham entirely altered matters.

Renewed negotiations for the marriage.

Buckingham's letter to Gondomar.

James accepts the new articles.

First idea of the journey to Madrid.

In September 1622, Prince Charles, exasperated like his father by the behaviour of the Commons in the last Parliament, had thrown aside his attitude of indifference to a marriage with the Spanish Infanta, and at the instigation, probably, of Buckingham,

whose influence with him was now paramount, had promised Gondomar that he would visit Madrid incognito if the ambassador, after his approaching mission to his own country, should consider such a step advisable[1]. Buckingham was afterwards charged with a Jesuitical design of bringing about by this means the Prince's conversion, but although the combined influence of his wife and mother had at one time inclined him, never a very fervent Protestant, to the Roman Catholic faith, it is certain that Buckingham's motives for the knight-errant journey to Madrid were chiefly a love of bold adventure and a desire to achieve a magnificent diplomatic triumph. It appears from a letter written by Buckingham's order to Gondomar that the design of a visit by Charles alone had been abandoned soon after his first promise in favour of a comparatively harmless scheme by which Buckingham as Lord Admiral was to proceed to Spain with a fleet to bring back the Infanta, having the Prince on board. This of course pre-supposed that the terms of the marriage treaty would be already settled, whereas the journey of Buckingham and Charles was undertaken when negotiations were still in the preliminary stage.

For a time the continued success of the Emperor's troops in the Palatinate, at Heidelberg and Mannheim[2], during the autumn of 1622, roused Charles and Buckingham, as well as the Privy Council, to a warlike fervour which was only restrained by the opposition of James, and the want of supplies, from finding vent in action. The return, however, of a special messenger from Madrid in December with conciliatory messages relating to the marriage and the affairs of the Palatinate[3], together with a secret despatch from Gondomar warmly approving of the Prince's offer to visit Madrid, caused the two young men to alter their minds. Already the King had assented to the scheme by which it had been arranged that Buckingham should fetch home the Infanta. In February 1623, they brought before James their further design for a secret expedition overland to Madrid, and asked for permission to depart at once. There is not, in the whole of English history, any political plan so entirely destitute of reason and foresight as that which Buckingham's vanity and levity had now suggested, but the King's fatal inability to resist the importunities of those about him had increased of late years when weakened by disease, and broken by the failure of his schemes. He consented at first, but on consideration saw clearly that the Spaniards could

1623. The journey proposed to James.

[1] Gardiner, Prince Charles and the Spanish Marriage, vol. ii. 254. It is almost unnecessary to state that Mr. Gardiner's account of the intricate negotiations at Madrid, which has superseded all others, has been followed implicitly.

[2] Heidelberg fell on Sept. 9th, 1622, after a brave defence by the English and Dutch garrison. Mannheim was taken by Tilly on Oct. 28.

[3] The King of Spain promised the English agent that if necessary he would assist by force of arms in the recovery of the Palatinate.

The King consents.

place only one construction upon the journey, and would in any case be induced to raise their demands. Nevertheless, he was overcome by the threats of Buckingham, and the new combination against him of his son and his favourite, and after some tears and passionate words, he reluctantly gave his assent to the most suicidal action of a foolish reign, and Charles and Buckingham without delay began to prepare for their romantic mission in search of a bride.

Arrival in Paris.

On the 18th of February the journey began[1]. Travelling incognito under the names of Thomas and John Smith, and attended only by Sir Richard Graham, the two adventurers left Newhall, and after being pursued as duellists at one time, and being arrested at Canterbury on suspicion that they were the sons of Barneveldt, who had lately been concerned in an attempt on the life of the Prince of Orange, arrived safely in Paris, having been joined at Dover by Sir Francis Cottington and Endymion Porter. They stayed one day in the French capital, and Charles saw his future wife, the Princess Henrietta Maria. Leaving Paris before daybreak on the 23rd, five days' hard riding brought them to the frontier of Spain[2]. Meantime in England angry outcries were heard from all sides against Buckingham for his share in the matter, and many declared that he should answer in Parliament for what was regarded as an act of high treason. In the country there was great excitement, and prayers were said in the churches for the Prince's safe return. Even the shrewd Bishop Williams was not without apprehensions[3]. The dismay of James' best advisers in England was shared by the Earl of Bristol, when on March 7th Charles and Buckingham knocked at the door of the English Embassy at Madrid. The same night the wonderful news of the Prince's arrival was told to Gondomar, to the King of Spain, and to Olivares, the reigning favourite and powerful minister. All three were unable to arrive at any other conclusion than that by undertaking this journey Charles intended to show his willingness to become a Roman Catholic. It was necessary for Olivares to alter his plans. He had been for some time placed in a difficult position, from his desire on the one hand to keep peace with England, on the other not to interfere against the Emperor in the Palatinate by arms. When the Infanta expressed her determination to retire into a nunnery rather than marry a heretic[4], he took her part, and although negotiations were allowed to continue, Olivares resolved in his own mind that the marriage should not

Arrival in Madrid.

[1] Before he set out Buckingham took the precaution of reconciling himself with his opponents. Monson and Brett too, the other candidates for the office of favourite, were knighted, and sent to travel on the Continent.

[2] The details of the journey are best given in Sir H. Wotton's Life, Harl. Misc viii. 615, and in the State Papers, James I, vol. cxxxviii.

[3] Hacket's Life, i. 116.

[4] Narrative of the Spanish Marriage treaty by Francisco de Jesus; Camden Society, 1879, p. 191.

take place[1], lest Philip should find himself obliged either to make war against the House of Austria, or against King James, after the Infanta had married the Prince. In following this course Olivares had to look forward to the possibility of his duplicity in the matter of the marriage negotiations being sooner or later revealed to the world. From all these anxieties the arrival of Charles promised to set him free. He was labouring under the common hallucination of most Spanish ministers of the period, and imagined that the conversion of the Prince of Wales could easily be brought about. He should then marry the Infanta, and by his influence his brother-in-law, the Elector, would be persuaded to agree to his son being brought up as a Roman Catholic. Peace would be restored to Europe, and England and the Palatinate would be restored to the dominion of the true Church.

Change in the plans of Olivares.

From this dream Olivares was soon awakened. He opened the subject of the marriage with Buckingham, and proposed that the treaty should be concluded at once. 'The means,' he said, 'are very easy. It is but the conversion of the Prince, which we cannot conceive but his Highness intended upon his resolution for this journey.' Buckingham protested against this interpretation though probably in no very decided language, for Olivares did not give up the absurd dream which filled his mind, while he gained time by urging the necessity, if Charles was not to change his religion, of sending to Rome for a dispensation. To the Prince himself Olivares talked about the iniquity of Mary Queen of Scots' execution, and was disappointed when Charles did not deign to enter into the question of religion, but merely offered to show him a portrait of his grandmother and to give him information on some historical points connected with her death[2]. At first it was supposed that Bristol was secretly preventing Charles from carrying out the purpose with which he had undertaken the journey, and Gondomar besought him not to hinder the conversion of the Prince, which Buckingham, he said, approved. When Bristol, however, told Charles of the rumours current in Madrid, he denied indignantly that he had the least intention of changing his religion[3].

Hopes of a conversion.

Towards the end of the month, Charles removed from the ambassador's house to the splendid apartments prepared for him

Second plan of Olivares.

[1] Unless of course the conversion of Charles took place, in which event there could be no objection from any point of view.

[2] Francisco de Jesus, 208.

[3] The whole negotiation is inexplicable unless the views of Olivares and his changes of attitude are clearly grasped. Before the journey to Madrid it may be safely said that Olivares was opposed to the marriage. While there was hope of a conversion, he was strongly in favour of it. When it appeared that neither the conversion of Charles nor complete toleration was to be obtained, he was working to prevent the marriage, while throwing the onus of a refusal, firstly on the Pope, secondly on the Junta of Theologians, by means of demands which he thought Charles could not possibly accede to. When Charles unexpectedly gave way he was willing that the marriage should take place, but not without the fulfilment of most stringent conditions.

in the royal Palace, and a series of magnificent festivities in his honour was begun, amid which Buckingham pressed Olivares to bring the marriage negotiations to a conclusion. Assuming that there was to be no conversion, and knowing the Infanta's firm intention not to marry a Protestant, Olivares saw before him a prospect of Charles returning to England baffled and irritated, ready to plunge into war with Spain to wipe out the shame of his failure. One way only at this time Olivares saw out of the difficulty. Beyond a doubt the Pope would demand full liberty of worship for the Catholics before he would grant a dispensation. The hope remained that the Infanta might agree to that which had satisfied the Head of the Church. Accordingly Olivares told Buckingham that there was little chance of obtaining a dispensation unless liberty of worship in England was granted, and was answered that such a condition was simply impossible, as it would cause a rebellion. After this Olivares appeared to give way and promised to write to Rome to hasten the dispensation, and Buckingham wrote to James giving a favourable account of the situation. He little dreamt that the envoy who had been dispatched to Rome, nominally to obtain an immediate dispensation for the marriage, carried a secret message to the Pope that a dispensation was no longer desired, as there was no hope of the Prince's conversion[1]. In these instructions the intention of Olivares is clearly shown. He had decided that if the conversion of Charles was impossible, there should be no marriage, but the blame of the failure should be shifted to the shoulders of the Pope, and by this means a war with England averted.

Duplicity of the Spaniards.

Renewed attempts at conversion.

The next month plunged Olivares into new difficulties, for the authorities at Rome were indisposed to endanger the safety of the Catholics in England by taking upon themselves the responsibility of causing the failure of the marriage treaty. News arrived at Madrid that almost as soon as the envoy had left Spain to prevent the grant of the dispensation, the College of Cardinals had determined to send it. Once more Olivares thought of the scheme for the Prince's conversion. He turned to Buckingham who, by not attending the Protestant service at the English Embassy and by showing respect to Catholic observances, had given the impression that he might be induced to change his faith, and persuaded him to agree to a religious conference. Buckingham, whose aim was to gain time for the arrival of the promised dispensation, offered to subject himself to the assaults of the Spanish theologians, and two conferences took place, at which Olivares himself and Francisco de Jesus, a Carmelite friar who played a prominent part in the marriage negotiations, in vain plied him with arguments until Buckingham's stolid indifference showed them that they were being played with. In the meantime the Cardinals at Rome had granted the dispensation, but under new conditions, by which the

Conditions of the dispensation.

[1] Vide Gardiner, ii. 39.

whole responsibility in the matter was left with the Spanish king. Philip was to swear that the promises made in the marriage treaty should be faithfully observed in England. When news of this arrived in Spain, a decided effort was made to convert the Prince, who was confronted by four learned friars, and in reply to their questions frankly declared that he had no doubts whatever as to the truth of his religion. The conference was brought to a sudden conclusion by the unseemly behaviour of Buckingham, who openly expressed his contempt for the friars, and at last threw down his hat in a fit of anger and stamped upon it, greatly to the disgust of the grave and decorous Spaniards[1]. When the dispensation arrived from Rome on April 24th it was found to be accompanied by new and more stringent articles, requiring that the children of the marriage should be under the mother's care until the age of twelve, that the Infanta's church should be open to all who chose to attend it, and that the English Catholics should no longer be required to take the oath of allegiance required by Act of Parliament. The dispensation was declared to be null and void until Philip should have taken an oath that substantial guarantees had been obtained for the due execution of the articles. When these new conditions became known, Buckingham, considering that they were an insult to himself and the prince, and that the Spaniards were taking advantage of their presence in Madrid, quarrelled with Olivares, and was ready to break off the treaty altogether. But Charles was obstinate. He was, or imagined himself to be, deeply in love with the Infanta[2], and could not bear to think that he was to return to England without his bride, the laughing-stock of Europe. After some hesitation he gave way, consented to the articles, and promised that he and James would guarantee the immediate suspension of the Penal Laws and would engage that Parliament should repeal them altogether within three years. Olivares had now to resort to other tactics. He was still resolved that there should be no marriage. His problem was now to break off negotiations without risk of war with England. The Pope had failed him, but he found the support he required in the Junta of Theologians, who had been appointed to consider under what conditions Philip would be justified in taking the oath required by the Pope. Under the influence of Olivares, towards the end of May, the Theologians declared that the only way in which the performance of the conditions of the marriage treaty could be assured was to retain the Infanta in Spain for a year after the marriage ceremony had taken place, within which period it would be seen whether King James would put into execution the articles in favour of the Roman Catholics. Moreover, the King of Eng-

New Articles.

Buckingham desirous of breaking off negotiations.

Decision of the Theologians.

[1] Francisco de Jesus, 211.

[2] In March Buckingham had written to the King, 'Baby Charles himself is so touched at the heart, that he confesses all he ever yet saw is nothing to her, and swears that if he wants her, there shall be blows.' Hardwicke, State Papers, i. 410.

Fresh demands.

land, the Prince of Wales, and the Privy Council, were to be required to swear that the relief to the Recusants should never be withdrawn. Olivares thought that at any rate it was impossible for Charles to agree to these demands. He himself would profess to be an eager supporter of the marriage, and would throw all the blame for any consequences upon the Theologians. When Buckingham heard of the latest requirements of the Spaniards he lost his temper, abused Olivares roundly, and declared that there had been nothing but trickery and deceit in the whole business. The news of the new conditions roused King James to an agony of fear, and he wrote at once ordering Charles to return home. He might consent to anything the Spanish ministers demanded, might marry the Infanta, or break off the treaty altogether, but at all costs he must return. 'Alas! I now repent me sore,' the old king wrote, 'that I ever suffered you to go away. I care for match, nor nothing, so I may once have you in my arms again [1].'

Behaviour of Buckingham.

In Spain, meanwhile, Buckingham held aloof while Bristol and Charles in vain tried to induce the Spanish Court to alter its resolution. For once the favourite was baffled by the obstinacy of Prince Charles, who refused to break off the negotiation, and spent his time in writing love-verses to the Infanta and endeavouring to break through the etiquette of Spanish court life by which he was prevented from pleading his cause personally with the object of his affections. On July 6th, Charles was informed of the final decision of the Theologians. He might marry the Infanta in September, but she could not be allowed to leave Spain until the following March, in order that the King of Spain might be satisfied that the articles would be carried into execution. Charles quietly replied that if this was a final determination the treaty was at an end, and announced his intention of returning home [2]. On the next day he changed his mind, and accepted in full the terms set forth by the Theologians. Madrid gave itself up at once to rejoicings and festivities, and an envoy was despatched to London with the news. The Infanta was spoken of as the Princess of England and appeared in public with the Prince. News arrived that James and his Council had sworn to the articles of the treaty, and once more Olivares was obliged to find some new pretext for preventing the marriage. Almost in despair he brought forward more secret articles, on the lines of those already sworn to, but of greater stringency. Charles and James were now required to promise not only that the Penal Laws should be suspended, but that within three years they should be completely abrogated. Furthermore, the articles of the treaty were to extend to Ireland and Scotland as well as to England [3]. For the third time Charles disappointed the expectations of the astonished Spanish minister, and agreed to these wholly impossible conditions. 'Is it possible?'

Charles accepts all the conditions.

Last effort of Olivares.

[1] Hardwicke, State Papers, i. 421.
[2] Francisco de Jesus, 246.
[3] Rushworth, vol. i. 89.

Olivares cried when he was told of the Prince's assent, 'I should as soon have expected my death.'

Change in the Spanish plans.

At length Olivares was obliged to confess that his wily diplomacy was no match for the unbounded pliancy of a young man desperately in love, and destitute of all sense of honour. He changed his tactics altogether and lent himself to bring about the marriage which he had so laboriously endeavoured to prevent. His first difficulty was with the Infanta. By the influence of the wife of Olivares and the arguments of a new confessor favourable to the match, she was prevailed upon to look more kindly on the marriage scheme, the hope being held out that by her means the conversion of the English nation might be attained. On July 20th Charles and Philip signed the marriage contract, containing the additional articles and also a proviso that, although the marriage might take place as soon as the Pope's dispensation arrived, the Infanta was not to leave Spain until the spring.

Signature of the contract.

Yet at the very time when he was signing these articles Charles was cherishing hopes that he would be able to return with the Infanta to England in August after all. Buckingham wrote to James to tell him of their expectation and asking the king to order their immediate return in order to expedite matters[1]. But the Spanish ministers resolutely declined to alter the time for the Infanta's departure, and while Charles wavered between his love for his promised bride and a desire to be free from the artifices of Olivares, Buckingham, impatient to be gone, lost his temper and talked of returning home alone. On August 20th Charles wrote to James that having failed in their endeavours to bring the Infanta with them, he, Buckingham, might soon be expected to arrive in England[2]. In his own mind Charles had probably by this time decided that the Infanta would never be his wife.

The Palatinate.

During these months not a word had been said about the Palatinate. Now at last, the marriage having apparently been decided upon, Olivares broached to Charles his scheme for the settlement of difficulties in Germany, by which the elector's son was to be educated at Vienna and marry the emperor's daughter. When Charles enquired whether, if the emperor proved refractory and declined to withdraw from the Palatinate, Spain would assist England in forcing him to come to terms, he was startled by Olivares' unguarded reply, 'We have a maxim of state,' he said, 'that the King of Spain must never fight against the emperor. We cannot employ our forces against the House of Austria[3].' It is almost incredible that in spite of this plain declaration from the Spaniards that the chief object of the whole negotiation was not to be obtained, Charles took a solemn oath binding himself to the marriage, and promised to leave behind him a proxy to be used as soon as the dispensation arrived.

Olivares betrays the intention of Spain regarding the Palatinate.

[1] Hardwicke, State Papers, i. 432.
[2] Ibid. i. 448.
[3] Buckingham's relation to the two Houses. Lords' Journals, iii. 226.

Buckingham's quarrel at Madrid.

On the 30th of August Charles and Buckingham left Madrid. The latter had come into very bad odour with the Spanish Court, king and ministers alike, who were not only offended by the indecorous familiarity with which he treated the prince, but by his insolent bearing towards Olivares and his general hostility to the Spanish plans. So much was this the case that Bristol took upon himself to write to James, that unless he could find some way to prove to the Spaniards that Buckingham would have no power to interfere in the relations between the two countries, there was little prospect of any profit arising from the alliance[1]. On the eve of departure Buckingham quarrelled with Olivares and complained of the bad offices he had done him with Prince Charles and the King of Spain, which made it impossible for him to regard Olivares as a friend. He hoped nevertheless that he would do his best to forward the marriage.

Return to England.

Prince Charles left Spain with every profession of regard from the Spanish court, escorted by the king and overwhelmed with costly presents. His last letter to Philip before leaving Spain was of the most assuring kind. 'I have a firm and constant resolution,' he wrote, 'to accomplish all that my father and I have treated of and agreed with your Majesty.' There seems to have been no doubt in Spain that the marriage would take place, and even the Infanta herself regarded it as settled and began to study English.

Reception.

On October 5th Charles and Buckingham landed at Portsmouth, and on the next day entered London amid the frantic rejoicings of the people, who, finding he had returned without the Infanta, supposed that the hated Catholic alliance was at an end. With difficulty Charles made his way through the thronging crowds who shouted, 'Long live the Prince of Wales,' while the bells pealed from every church-tower and all business was suspended. Banquets were spread in the open streets, and hogsheads of wine opened for common consumption, while some enthusiasts were so far carried away as to pay the debts of men in prison altogether unknown to them. At night London was lighted up by illuminations and innumerable bonfires. Never since the accession of Elizabeth had there been such universal joy amongst the people.

End of the negotiations.

It was not long before the marriage negotiations were broken off, James and Charles both insisted that the proxy was not to be surrendered until a pledge had been given by the Spanish ministers to interfere by arms in the Palatinate. On December 2nd Philip distinctly refused to make war upon the Emperor, and the long negotiation for a Spanish alliance was virtually at an end.

Responsibility of Buckingham.

For the incredible folly of the journey to Madrid, with its consequences, the discredit into which the monarchy fell in England, and the increased violence of the Protestant spirit, the Duke of Buckingham, as he had now become while absent in Spain, must be held chiefly responsible, but it is a mistake to attribute the failure

[1] Hardwicke, State Papers, i. 478.

of the negotiations at Madrid to his insolence and haughty behaviour. The causes lay far deeper, and must be sought in the strong determination of the Spanish ministers not to agree to the marriage unless, either by the conversion of Prince Charles, or by the complete and certain abrogation of the Penal Laws, an opportunity might be afforded for the ultimate return of the English people to the Church of Rome. On the other hand, James desired the marriage chiefly as a means to the restoration of the Palatinate, in which he had nothing in common with Spain, whose interests were bound up with the House of Austria, and would scarcely have been induced to give his consent to it unless his object was to be obtained. Buckingham had little influence over such motives as these, and, whatever faults he may have committed at Madrid, he at any rate wished to return when he discovered what the demands of the Spanish ministers really were, and he was entirely free from the dishonourable pliancy of Prince Charles and the duplicity of the Count of Olivares.

SECTION III.

COMPLETE ASCENDANCY OF BUCKINGHAM.

Chapter I.

The Breach with Spain.—Last Parliament of James I.—Buckingham's Popularity.—Intrigues of the Spanish Ambassadors.—Impeachment of Lord Middlesex.—Negotiations for an Alliance with France.—Count Mansfield's Expedition.—The King's Death.

Altered position of Buckingham.

The humiliating failure which had resulted from the hairbrained schemes of Charles and Buckingham was not without important influence upon the position and future career of the favourite. From the day when he landed at Portsmouth to the fatal hour when the fanaticism of Felton ended his life, Buckingham was the First Minister of England, the arbiter of her destinies and the ruler of her kings. Over Prince Charles Buckingham, with his gay, good-natured ways, his fascinating manners, his artistic tastes and similarity of interests, his magnificent ideas and restless energy, had almost from the first exercised complete control[1]. It was true they had differed at Madrid with regard to the Infanta, but it was now proved beyond a doubt that Buckingham's theory of the intentions of the Spaniards had been correct, and that Charles had allowed himself to be deluded by Olivares and the Junta of Theologians. Henceforth Charles entertained the highest opinion of Buckingham's sagacity and devotion, which he continued to hold in the teeth of conspicuous disasters at home and abroad, and the plainly-expressed denunciations of his Parliament and people.

Practical retirement of the King.

The favourite's relations to the King also now changed: for James, broken by the failure of his plans for the recovery of the Palatinate by pacific means, and yet unable to give up his cherished scheme for reinstating the Lady Elizabeth in her dominions, saw that if his object was to be attained at all, there was but one way, and that way was Buckingham's[2]. The Palatinate could only be recovered by force of arms. James hated war above all things, but was unable to assert himself against Buckingham in alliance with the popular party in the country, and heartily supported by the Prince of Wales. So with much grumbling and many protestations that Buckingham 'had he knew not how many devils within him since that journey,' the old King gradually relaxed his control over

[1] Ranke, History of England, vol. i. 544.
[2] Gardiner, England under the Duke of Buckingham and Charles I, vol. i. 3.

the policy of the government, and Buckingham became master of the situation.

Breach with Spain imminent.

As yet there had been no formal breach with Spain, but in January 1624 there were evident signs of approaching hostilities. Lord Bristol was recalled from Madrid, and the Earl of Oxford, who had been imprisoned in the Tower for an attack upon Gondomar, was released [1]. Envoys were despatched in quick succession to Denmark, Venice, and Savoy, Sweden and the Protestant princes of North Germany, and writs were issued for a new Parliament. The Spanish ambassadors indeed endeavoured to conciliate the King, who was always only too willing to accept overtures from Spain, but the breaking off of the treaties was rendered inevitable when Lord Kensington was sent over to Paris to prepare the way for a marriage between Prince Charles and the Princess Henrietta Maria. Buckingham meanwhile, impatient of delay, vainly attempted to persuade the English commissioners for Spanish affairs to advise the King to declare war at once. They agreed with him in wishing that the marriage treaty should be abrogated, but refused to recommend hostilities against Spain on the ground that they had no information to guide them. James decided that the whole matter should be left for the decision of the Parliament which was to meet within a few days.

The King's speech to Parliament.

Parliament assembled on Feb. 19th, but, to the disappointment of the courtiers, in spite of the popularity of Charles and Buckingham since their return from Spain, many of their nominees failed to obtain seats, while Coke and Sandys, the most prominent opponents of the Court in the last Parliament, had been re-elected. The King's opening speech was strangely subdued and humble in its tone [2]. He had come, he said, to ask the advice of Parliament in the greatest matters that could concern a king. He besought them to judge his actions charitably, and not to believe that in the negotiations of the last few years he had ever pledged himself to alter the laws concerning religion. The Parliament should hear from Buckingham and the Secretaries of State an account of the negotiations with Spain, and were then to advise him what ought to be done [3].

Buckingham's account of the negotiations.

Supported by Prince Charles, Buckingham made his statement to the assembled Houses on the 24th. He did not tell them the whole truth about the marriage treaty. He ignored the worst part of Charles' conduct at Madrid, his silence on the subject of his religion, and his insincere promises to obtain for the Catholics impossible concessions; but he does not seem to have been guilty of deliberate falsehood, and at least he proved conclusively that, although

[1] Court and Times of James I, ii. 445. This was done by Buckingham's influence, almost against the King's will.

[2] James had dissolved his last Parliament in anger because they wished to interfere in foreign affairs. The Commons were now invited to discuss the relations with foreign states, and give their advice

Rushworth, vol. i. 116.

the marriage treaty had been entered into chiefly in the hope of obtaining the restitution of the Palatinate, and although the King of Spain had promised to bring this about, if need were, by force of arms, there had never been the least intention on the part of the Spanish ministers of fulfilling the promise. He concluded his relation by asking whether the King was to agree to the education of the Elector Frederic's children at the Imperial court, and trust to the vague expectations held out by Spain of a consequent restoration of the Palatinate, or whether, setting aside all treaties, 'his Majesty were best to trust to his own strength and to stand upon his feet.' Buckingham's speech was most favourably received, and brought him great popularity with the nation[1], eagerly desirous of a war with Spain. The Spanish ambassadors did what was necessary in order to convert him into a national hero. In a state of great indignation they came to the King to protest against the language used by Buckingham towards their sovereign in his speech. James excused himself from taking any steps on the ground that he had not heard the Duke's statement, but the Houses of Parliament were not slow to take up the challenge of the ambassadors. In the Lords, the Earl of Pembroke, who, after wavering for some time had now returned to his allegiance to the favourite, carried without opposition a motion exculpating Buckingham from any blame for what he had said, while in the Commons, amid great excitement and enthusiasm, it was resolved that Buckingham deserved the thanks of Parliament and the nation. It was a significant result of the alliance now existing between Buckingham and the Protestant, anti-Spanish party, that Sir Edward Coke declared that no man had ever deserved better of the King and country[2].

His popularity.

Debate in the Commons.

On the 1st of March the House of Commons entered upon the real business of the session by a debate upon the relations of England with Spain. Sir Benjamin Rudyerd, acting probably in communication with Buckingham[3], spoke in favour of breaking of all treaties of alliance with Spain and a declaration of war against the chief enemy of Protestantism. Descending to details, Rudyerd recommended that the fortifications of the country should be strengthened and Ireland secured, that the alliance of the Protestant princes of Germany should be cultivated and substantial assistance given to the Low Countries, but above all, that the King, whenever he made war for the Palatinate would make it 'near at hand by way of diversion to save charges,' that is to say, would attack Spain on the sea[4]. Neither Rudyerd nor the House of Commons wished to engage in a war on the Continent against the Emperor

[1] Wilson, James I, p. 264. 'This his discovery is cried up everywhere, and who but the duke is become the darling of the multitude?'

[2] Commons' Journals, i. 721.

[3] Rudyerd had great influence with the popular party, and as he also held an office in the Court of Wards, was well fitted to be Buckingham's agent at this juncture.

[4] State Papers, 1623–1625, p. 174.

of Germany, of whose politics they were ignorant and whose strength they greatly underrated. But they knew that Spain had made her influence felt in England in favour of the hated Recusants, that she was the head of the Catholic confederacy, and that war with the power which possessed the West Indies was always profitable. Religion and the love of gain, intense Protestant zeal and the old buccaneering spirit of the days of Elizabeth, combined to make the Commons enthusiastic in their desire for a complete breach with Spain. It is important to notice how wide was the difference between the aims of the Commons and those of the King. James desired above all things the restoration of the Palatinate to his son-in-law. He had tried hard to obtain his object by a close alliance with Spain, and having failed, was now prepared to go to war. But he had no wish to break with Spain, if he could avoid it. He detested the idea of a religious crusade, and considered, perhaps rightly, that the only way in which the restitution of the Palatinate could be brought about was by a war waged on the Rhine against the Emperor. It was far otherwise with the House of Commons. They kept Germany in the background. It was against Spain, the traditional enemy of England, by whose influence the Recusants had been left to increase in numbers and power, against the country of Gondomar and Inojosa that Coke and Eliot wished the efforts of England to be directed.

Objects of the House of Commons different from those of the King.

The result of this divergence of aims was soon seen, when James, pleading indisposition, refused to receive the petition of the Commons in which their view of the situation was expressed. The letter which the Duke of Buckingham wrote to his sovereign in consequence is a striking proof of the change of relations which had been effected since the favourite had found support in Parliament. 'Notwithstanding,' he wrote, 'this unfavourable interpretation I find made of a thankful and loyal heart, in calling my words crude Catonic words, I will tell the House of Parliament that you, having been on the fields this afternoon, have taken such a fierce rheum and cold, as not knowing how you will be this night, you are not yet able to appoint a day of hearing; but I will forbear to tell them that, notwithstanding your cold, you were able to speak with the King of Spain's instruments, though not with your own subjects[1].' This insolent letter seems to have produced some result, for two days afterwards James gave an answer to the petition, in which he accepted the 'four points' laid down by Rudyerd, and promised that all supplies granted by the Commons should be disbursed by their own treasurers. But the King declared that he did not care to own a furrow of land in his own kingdom unless he could obtain the restitution of the Palatinate, and hinted that it would be necessary to assist the German Princes as well as the Low Countries. In a second conference, however, he spoke so hesitatingly about breaking off negotiations with Spain, that the

Buckingham's interference.

James's hesitation to break with Spain.

[1] Hardwicke, State Papers, vol. i. 460.

Commons were driven to believe that there was to be no war at all. Again Buckingham, confident of the support of Prince Charles and Parliament, brought pressure to bear upon the King. Already he had warned him that, so long as he vacillated between his own subjects and Spain, he was likely to fall between two stools and to obtain nothing from either[1]. Now on his knees he besought James to accede to the wishes of the Commons, and consent to active hostilities against Spain, and, to strengthen his case, suggested a close alliance with France. On the next day Prince Charles was able to announce that the King had no longer any doubts about the justice of the war. The House of Commons, accordingly, after a long debate in which it was clearly shown that they were opposed altogether to a war in Germany, voted supplies to the amount of 300,000*l.* for the 'four points,' 'namely, the defence of this realm, the securing of Ireland, the assistance of your neighbours, the States of the United Provinces and others of your Majesty's friends and allies, and the setting forth of your Royal Navy.' The King on his part declared that the treaties should be at an end, and on the evening of March 23rd all London devoted itself to rejoicings and insulting the Spaniards.

Yet James still hesitated. On March 29th he had informed the Spanish ambassadors that negotiations were at an end, but a petition of the Commons on April 3rd demanding the execution of the laws against Recusants[2] seems to have caused him again to pause before he committed himself to a war against the power, which he had always dreamt would support him if he had difficulties with his subjects. At any rate he recalled the courier who had been despatched to Madrid to announce his recent determination. He was resolved, he said, not to make this a war of religion.

Spanish intrigues against Buckingham.

But there was probably another cause of James' irritation at this time and his sudden change of attitude towards Spain. The Spanish envoys, Inojosa and Coloma, exasperated by the turn which affairs were taking and imagining that the King's resolve to break off the marriage negotiations was entirely due to Buckingham's malice, made a determined effort to deprive him of the King's favour. Coloma's secretary, Carondelet, having with great

[1] This letter is characteristic of Buckingham. 'Sir, I beseech you,' he wrote, 'think seriously of this and resolve at once constantly to run one way. For so long as you waver between the Spaniards and your subjects to make your advantage of both, you are sure to do it with neither. I should for my own contentment . . . wait upon you oftener, but that you going two ways, and I myself only one, it occasions so many disputes that, till you be once resolved, I think it is of more comfort and care to you and safer for me that I now abide away.' (Hard. State Papers, i. 466).

[2] Rushworth, i. 140. 'I doubt not,' the King wrote to Sec. Conway, 'but you have heard what a stinging petition against the Papists the Lower House have sent to the Upper House this day . . . ye know my firm resolution not to make this a war of religion . . . I pray you stay the post that is going into Spain.'

difficulty procured a private audience with James, laid before him a series of accusations against Buckingham, charging him with having spoken disrespectfully of the King and of having formed a plot to compel his abdication and place Prince Charles on the throne. Carondelet added that if James would dismiss his favourite, the Palatinate should be restored within three months[1]. The King was very much disturbed, but the charges were too monstrous for belief, and while he called upon the Spaniard to prove his allegations, or withdraw what he had said, he again ordered his messenger to start for Madrid to announce his withdrawal from the negotiations. Meanwhile, Lord Keeper Williams, eager now to regain the place which he had lost in Buckingham's favour by opposing him at the council-table with regard to war with Spain, had discovered the secret interviews of the Spanish envoys with James, and had informed Buckingham, who however took no notice until, late in April, Inojosa reiterated the charges and challenged James to examine Buckingham's friends upon oath as to whether he had not spoken of dethroning the King, if he refused to make war against Spain. With tears in his eyes James repeated to Charles and Buckingham what the ambassador had said. The duke at once refused to accompany the King to Windsor until his innocence was established. He had not to wait very long. The privy councillors one by one declared that they had heard no treasonable expressions from Buckingham's lips, and the ill-advised attempt of the ambassadors recoiled upon themselves. It is not difficult to believe that Buckingham may have let fall in conversation words as insolent as those used in his letters to the King, but, for the rest, the charges of the Spanish ambassadors were untrue, and carried their own refutation with them. This temporary estrangement, however, is probably the foundation for the belief held by many of his contemporaries[2] and followed by some historians, that, if James had lived, Buckingham would have fallen like Somerset.

Discovered by Williams

Buckingham cleared by the Privy Council.

The attempt of the Spanish ambassadors to deprive him of the King's favour having completely broken down, Buckingham turned savagely upon the man who was generally supposed to have supplied Inojosa with information[3]. Cranfield, the Lord Treasurer, who had been raised from obscurity and made Earl of Middlesex chiefly through Buckingham's favour, had for some time opposed his patron's schemes, and of all the Privy Councillors was most averse to a war with Spain, knowing that the finances of England could not possibly bear the strain. When Lord Keeper Williams and the Earl of Pembroke made peace with the favourite, and the rest of the Council opposed to war maintained a prudent silence, Middlesex made a resolute attempt to thwart his policy, even going so far at last as to use the assistance of the Spanish ambassadors in

Fall of Middlesex.

[1] Cabala, 275.

[2] Vide Clarendon, i. 14.

[3] State Papers Domestic, vol. 164. 12, and 163. 50. Sir R. Nethersole to Carleton. 'The Lord Treasurer is suspected of a hand in this plot.'

Causes of his disgrace.

order to undermine Buckingham's position at Court. Already, before Buckingham had entered upon negotiations at Madrid, Middlesex had endeavoured to supplant him in the King's favour through the agency of a handsome youth, his brother-in-law, Arthur Brett; but the attempt failed, and Brett was sent to travel on the Continent. The Lord Treasurer had given great offence, moreover, to Prince Charles by bluntly declaring at a meeting of the Privy Council that whether the Prince liked it or not, he ought to marry the Infanta 'from reasons of state[1]'. Buckingham attributed the King's recent doubts of his faithfulness, his secret dealings with the Spanish envoys and his dislike to the war, to the hostile influence of Middlesex. When, therefore, at the end of March Arthur Brett re-appeared in England, Buckingham resolved, as had happened so often before, to remove the obnoxious minister from his path. It was easy to formulate charges against the Treasurer. His careful, watch-dog management of the finances had made him many enemies, and the former merchant's-apprentice had gained an unenviable reputation for surliness and arrogance. While he had proved himself the ablest financier of the day, and had won the heart of James by his economies, he had accumulated for himself in a few years a fortune of 100,000*l.* On April 15 he was impeached before the House of Lords by Coke and Sandys on behalf of the Commons, the chief accusations against him being that he had received bribes from the farmers of the customs, that he had neglected the repair of the fortifications—a dangerous charge when brought against a minister favourable to Spain—and had kept no accounts as Master of Wards. Middlesex had certainly been guilty of malversation, but the charges against him, as against Lord Bacon, were exaggerated, and many things which now appear in the light of criminal offences were, during the reign of James I., ordinary incidents of official routine. On the whole, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Lord Treasurer, while he had laid himself open to accusations, was in reality sacrificed to the resentment of Buckingham[2]. No sooner had the favourite given the signal for his overthrow, than his opponents caught at the opportunity, and his fellow-councillors deserted him, while the King, who endeavoured to shield him, could do nothing against Buckingham, Prince Charles, and the House of Commons. After a bold, uncompromising defence, Middlesex was sentenced by the Lords to lose his offices and pay a fine of 50,000*l.*, declared incapable of sitting in Parliament or holding any office of state, and condemned to be imprisoned during the King's pleasure. His impeachment was emphatically condemned by the King, who saw clearly that it afforded a sure precedent for the future, and was not blind to the

Charges against him.

Sentence of the Lords.

[1] England under Buckingham and Charles I, i. 163.

[2] State Papers Dom., 1624, April 4th, D. Carleton to Sir Dudley Carleton. 'His late conduct in Parliament and his bringing home Arthur Brett, his kinsman . . . have brought him into this trouble, which is rather a private grudge between him and Buckingham.' So too Clarendon and Hacket.

possible dangers accruing from the practice of disabling a political opponent by bringing criminal accusations against him. 'You are a fool,' he told Buckingham; 'you are making a rod with which you will be scourged yourself.'

Lord Bristol's return.

There still remained, however, a more formidable antagonist than the Earl of Middlesex. Lord Bristol, the steadfast supporter of the Spanish alliance on fair and honourable terms, had been recalled in January, and had now arrived in England, smarting under the treatment he had received from Buckingham, but without any intention for the present of throwing himself into opposition [1]. Buckingham, afraid of his influence with James and his full knowledge of the transactions at Madrid, persuaded the King—rather against his will, for he wished to see his two ministers reconciled—to order Bristol to remain in his country-house [2]. Bristol, who was too proud to follow the example of Pembroke and make his submission, refused to acknowledge that he had been in error at Madrid, and demanded, if he had committed any offence, to be placed upon his trial. James, remembering what had happened to Middlesex, refused to expose him to the attacks of his political antagonists, and contented himself with sending a paper of interrogatories for Bristol to answer. The commissioners appointed to investigate the matter, and the King himself, were so satisfied with the replies that James was half-inclined to receive the ambassador, which was precisely what Charles and Buckingham dreaded above all things. The latter was not only afraid that he might suffer personally by Bristol's disclosures, but knew also that all hope would be gone of inducing James to persevere in his present policy against Spain, if he held communication with the minister who had for three years been doing his best to establish a firm alliance between the two countries. He offered to compromise matters with Bristol, pledging himself that all further proceedings should be dropped if he would resign his office of Vice-Chamberlain [3] and retire to his castle at Sherborne; but Bristol declined again to acknowledge that he had done anything worthy of punishment. By some means of which we are ignorant, Buckingham and Charles succeeded in getting their way, and James never saw Bristol again.

Bristol refuses to come to terms.

Foreign Policy of 1624.

While at home Buckingham's efforts were directed towards silencing the chief opponents of a warlike policy, he was engaged abroad during the year 1624 with negotiations for a close alliance with France. It has been said that immediately after the return from Madrid Lord Kensington had been sent over to Paris to sound the French Court as to the possibility of a marriage between the Princess Henrietta Maria, the sister of the French King, and Prince Charles. It can hardly be denied that if the necessity for

[1] Earl of Bristol's Defence, Camden Misc. vol. vi. Preface.

[2] Buckingham had at first thought of sending him to the Tower, but was prevented by the advice of Pembroke.

[3] State Trials, ii. 1296.

a war to regain the Palatinate be admitted, there is a good deal to be said on behalf of Buckingham's anxiety for an alliance with France. At this time Lewis XIII, although a good Catholic, was greatly alarmed by the increase of the power of the House of Austria, and was quite willing to ally himself with England against Spain. The Queen-Mother too, Mary de Medici, was known to be anxious for a matrimonial alliance, although her chief object was to serve the cause of her religion and gain relief for the English Catholics. James himself was quite ready to revert to his former policy of friendship with France, more especially as he dreaded the prospect of a religious war. Nevertheless there were great difficulties in the way of the alliance, which to any minister less foolish than the Duke of Buckingham, would have seemed insuperable. In the first place, the aims of James and Lewis were not the same. The King of England desired above all things to see the Palatinate again in the hands of his son-in-law; the King of France, as a devoted Catholic, would only support him in obtaining this object, as a last resource in order to check the threatening power of Spain, and for himself was most anxious about the recovery of the Valtelline, an important territory lying between the Tyrolese mountains and the Lake of Como, which at this time afforded the best means of communication for the Spaniards between Italy and Germany. It was now occupied by a Spanish force, and the efforts of the French had for some time been directed towards obtaining its restoration. It was quite possible for the two countries to unite in a common attack upon Spain, leaving England to make a diversion in the Palatinate while France followed her own interests in the Valtelline; but as the ultimate aims of the two Kings were in reality so different, any attempt at forming a close offensive and defensive alliance would probably end in disagreement and hostility. There was a still greater difficulty arising from religious considerations. On April 5th, when the Commons had sent up their petition against the Recusants, Prince Charles had given his word that, if he married a Catholic Princess, no advantage should accrue to the Recusants at home[1], and a few weeks later James had given a pledge to the House of Commons to put in force the Penal Laws, and had fully agreed that in the treaty for his son's marriage no immunity for the Catholics should be granted[2]. It soon became apparent, however, that the French would not consent to the marriage unless the laws against the Catholics were relaxed. Buckingham therefore must have known that if he entered into a close alliance with the French on their own terms he must be prepared to lose the support of the English

Dangers of an alliance with France.

Promises of James and Charles about the Catholics.

[1] Gardiner, vol. i. 56.

[2] Vide James' speech in answer to the petition of Parliament. 'Therefore assure yourselves that, by the grace of God, I will be careful that no such condition be hereafter foisted in upon any other treaty whatsoever: for it is fit that my subjects should stand or fall to their own lord.' Lords' Journals, iii. 317, 318.

Parliament. But, like James himself, he did not fully understand the vital necessity of securing the hearty support of the nation if any warlike enterprise was to be attempted; and his sanguine temperament led him to believe that all the advantages of an alliance with France might be obtained without making any concessions which would alienate the English people.

In the long negotiations, which occupied nearly the whole of the year, Buckingham was thoroughly overreached by the French diplomatists. At the outset everything went well. Lord Kensington was favourably received and sent home enthusiastic accounts of Henrietta's beauty and virtues; but it was not long before James was warned by the resident English ambassador against concluding a marriage treaty without some guarantee for help in the matter of the Palatinate. James and Buckingham, notwithstanding, had no fears, and when Count Mansfield, the unscrupulous adventurer who had by his excesses disgraced the Protestant cause in Germany, arrived in England in April with proposals from Lewis, he was joyfully received by the King and welcomed too by the people, who regarded his presence as a sign that a thoroughly Protestant policy was now to be adopted. He won the heart of James by holding out hopes of the speedy recovery of the Palatinate; and on April 20th the King entered into an engagement to provide him with 13,000 troops and 20,000*l.* a month for their support, on condition that the French King should furnish an equal force. The joint army was to be under Mansfield's command, and was to be used for the recovery of the Palatinate and the Valtelline. At the same time preparations for war were begun in earnest. A Council of the best soldiers and administrators in England was formed on the 21st. Commissioners were appointed to treat with the Dutch, and orders were issued for twelve ships to be added to the royal navy, and for the equipment of thirty merchant vessels. Early in June a treaty was signed with the Dutch, by which England agreed to provide 6000 troops for two years and to undertake their maintenance.

Visit of Mansfield.

After the prorogation of Parliament on May 29th the negotiations for a marriage treaty and alliance with France were eagerly pushed on. Already James Hay, Earl of Carlisle, had been sent to Paris as special ambassador, and was beginning to discover that the French would agree to no treaty without a written engagement guaranteeing the security of the Catholics. James and Charles at first refused to listen to any such proposition, and the negotiations would probably have been nipped in the bud but for the suggestion of a middle course by La Vieuville, the French minister. He sent the Marquis of Effiat as his envoy to ask that at least James would write a private letter containing a promise to show favour to the Catholics. The Marquis was not long in discovering that Buckingham was the real ruler of England, and applied to him to assist in bringing about an arrangement. Buckingham readily lent his aid, for he had determined to chastise Spain and recover the

Negotiations with France.

Buckingham's responsibility.

Palatinate at all risks, and saw no way of effecting his object except by alliance with France. He ignored the promises made by James to Parliament and thought nothing of the possible alienation of the English nation. It was perhaps the most momentous resolution of his life when he decided to throw in his lot with the French ambassador. Most of his subsequent troubles and difficulties may be directly traced to this alliance with France, for which he was almost entirely responsible. When Lord Kensington was instructed to inform the French that James would write the required letter, the seed was sown of the complications of the next four years. The French Court, however, was not satisfied with this concession, and La Vieuville, who had obtained it, was dismissed from his office, and Cardinal Richelieu took his place, Lewis XIII being determined not to agree to the marriage unless the fullest security was given for the better treatment of the Catholics. Richelieu plainly intimated his master's intention. 'We must have,' he said, 'either an article, or a writing—baptize it by what name you will—signed and sworn to, so as to oblige the good faith of your King.' Again for a time James and Prince Charles rejected the demand, and it was rumoured that the match would not take place. It was in vain that Buckingham wrote to Lewis imploring him to accept James's offer of a letter. Richelieu, on the contrary, raised his terms, and insisted that the Catholics in England should enjoy the same advantages as had been secured for them in the treaty with Spain, to be embodied in an article which was to be signed by the King, Prince Charles, and a Secretary of State. He gave as his reason for requiring such an agreement that it was necessary to satisfy the Pope. Buckingham, having thrown in his lot with the French, and knowing that already he had done enough to forfeit his popularity at home, blindly set himself to conquer the opposition of James and the Prince to these new demands. Charles was soon won over, and James could not long stand alone. On September 7th the King yielded in all essential points to Richelieu's terms. The consequences followed immediately. The laws against the Recusants, set in motion a few months before at the instance of the House of Commons, were suspended and Parliament was prorogued to the February of the next year, nominally because of the unhealthy state of London, really because Buckingham was afraid to meet it, and hoped by the advent of the young French Princess to soften the hostility of the English Puritans to the changes in the treatment of the Catholics.

The French raise their demands.

Suspension of Penal Laws.

Buckingham had sacrificed the good-will of the nation for the sake of the French alliance. It remained to be seen how far his hopes that the French would cordially co-operate in the recovery of the Palatinate would be realized. Late in September Count Mansfield had returned to England, with offers from the King of France to supply him with the same number of troops as promised by James. But it soon appeared that the French would give no

Small gain from the French alliance.

guarantee that the troops were to be used for the Palatinate, nor even a written promise that the English contingent should be allowed to land in France. And yet at the same time they required more stringent conditions as to the marriage treaty, arguing that a mere letter, although signed by the King and his son, would not be sufficient. James had already yielded so much that Charles and Buckingham had little difficulty in persuading him to make this further concession and agree to a formal engagement. On November 9th the marriage-treaty was signed by the English ambassadors in Paris[1]. The French gained all they had demanded; Buckingham had to be content with a written promise from the French King to pay Count Mansfield for six months, and a verbal assurance that he should be allowed to invade the Palatinate.

Signature of the Treaty.

Mansfield and his expedition now became the chief object of Buckingham's care. Against the spirit, if not against the letter, of the Subsidy Act passed by the Commons, 55,000*l.* was obtained from the Council of War to equip troops to be employed in Germany[2]. At the end of October orders had been issued to levy 12,000 troops for the expedition, and shortly afterwards Mansfield arrived to superintend matters himself. Never perhaps did an armament leave the English shores with less chance of success than this, which was intended to check the advances of Tilly and Spinola. The character of the commander, who was dreaded almost equally by the Protestants and Catholics of Germany, the absurd notion of the King of England that he could make war for the recovery of the Palatinate without a breach with Spain, the want of co-operation with the German princes, the success of the French in securing their object, the territory of the Valtelline, and the wretched equipment of the troops, all combined to make the expedition almost hopeless from the first. In addition, there arose a disagreement between the French and English governments as to the direction in which the troops were to be used. James desired that they might land in France and invade the Palatinate, but the French, having recently concluded a league with the Dutch, wished Mansfield to assist in the relief of

Mansfield's expedition.

[1] The marriage treaty was ratified by James at Cambridge on Dec. 12th. The following engagement was signed by Prince Charles, and should be compared with his voluntary promise in the House of Lords on April 25th. 'I will promise to all the Roman Catholic subjects of the crown of Great Britain the utmost of liberty and franchise in everything regarding their religion which they would have had in virtue of any articles which were agreed upon by the treaty of marriage with Spain, not being willing that the aforesaid Roman Catholic subjects should be disquieted in their persons and goods for making profession of their aforesaid religion and for living as Catholics, provided however that they use the permission modestly, and render the obedience which as good and true subjects they owe to their king.' Gardiner, i. 119.

[2] This assistance to Mansfield was probably held to be justified by the clause in the Act, 'The assistance of your neighbours the States of the United Provinces and others, your Majesty's friends and allies.' But the Commons had shown plainly that they did not intend the money for a war in Germany.

Breda, now besieged by the Spanish general Spinola. For more than two months the miserable quarrel continued as to whether Mansfield should land in France and march through the Spanish Netherlands, or proceed by way of Holland, the object of each government being, apparently, to embroil the other with Spain without breaking peace itself. Meanwhile the levies of pressed soldiers were in a pitiable condition at Dover. Consisting of the very worst and lowest of the populace, they were not very promising antagonists of the veterans of Tilly and Spinola, but their disorganization was made complete by the want of money and by bad management [1]. It was with considerable trouble that Mansfield had obtained the money due to him in December, and there was no prospect that the supply for January would be forthcoming. The arrangements for transporting the troops were disgracefully mismanaged, for when the men arrived at Dover very few vessels had assembled, and of these only a part had been able to enter the harbour. There was neither food nor pay for the soldiers, and consequently they roamed about the country, robbing, deserting, and mutinying [2]. When at last on the 31st of January Mansfield sailed from Dover, he had received notice from the French government not to land on the French coast, while James had issued orders to the colonels of the army forbidding them to obey Mansfield if he endeavoured to employ the troops for the relief of Breda. Without money, with provisions for five days only, the English armament for the restitution of the Palatinate landed in mid-winter at Flushing. Three regiments were transferred safely to Gortruidenburg, a town not far from Breda, but the rest, not having tasted food for two days, exposed without sufficient clothing to frost and snow, would have perished but for the timely assistance of the Dutch government. Little could have been effected under such circumstances, but as the way to the Palatinate was barred by the Imperialist armies, and James still refused to allow the troops to be used at Breda, at the end of March nothing whatever had been accomplished, and of the whole number of 12,000 soldiers only 3000 men were capable of bearing arms.

The state of the troops at Dover.

Disasters in Holland, 1625.

Buckingham had other schemes besides Count Mansfield's expedition. The demands made by Gustavus of Sweden to secure his active co-operation in the war had been rejected by James as too high, but in February 1625 the King promised to supply Christian IV of Denmark with 7000 troops and 15,000*l.* a month to enable him to lead an army into Germany. The Lord Admiral,

Buckingham's other plans.

[1] Court and Times of James I, ii. 487. John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton:—'But such a rabble of raw and poor rascals have not lately been seen, and go so unwillingly that they must be rather driven than led. You may guess how base we are grown, when one that was pressed hanged himself for fear . . . . another cut off the fingers of one hand, and another put out one of his eyes with salt.'

[2] Ibid. ii. 490. 'Our soldiers about Dover, and in their way hitherward, commit many outrages, and live, as they say, at discretion.' Vide also State Papers Dom., vol. clxxvii.

however, was not content that no naval enterprise should be set on foot; and towards the end of 1624 he had formed the design, which he attempted to carry into effect in the following summer, of landing an army on the coast of Spain, and especially of intercepting the treasure-fleets from the West Indies. It was by this means that he was confident Spain could be best assailed and compelled to assist in the restoration of the Palatinate.

Troubles with the Huguenots.

In the last days of December an event had occurred which was destined to exercise an important bearing upon the fortunes of both Charles and Buckingham. Civil war had again broken out in France, the occasion being the seizure of six vessels of war by one of the Huguenot leaders, the Duke of Soubise. Richelieu at once demanded help from the allies of France, Holland and England, and Buckingham, without consulting James, who subsequently however gave his full approval, sent the French ambassador an assurance that England would assist the French government against the rebellious Protestants.

Buckingham's position in 1625.

At the beginning of 1625 Buckingham was preparing to go to France to make the final arrangements for the marriage, and to act as Charles's proxy. The King was extremely anxious to see the Princess in England, and was annoyed by the difficulties which the Pope threw in the way of the marriage by demanding that the article concerning the Catholics should be made public. James resolutely declined to agree to this, and Richelieu took his part, promising that, if the Pope did not issue the dispensation required within a month, the marriage should take place without it. Buckingham was now, partly in consequence of the success of the negotiations with France, without an opponent in England. His only dangerous adversaries, Bristol and Middlesex, were for the time silenced, while the Privy Council and all the chief offices were filled with his supporters, men like Weston, Conway, and Williams. Probably from a sincere regard for the public advantage, he had lately persuaded Lord Zouch to surrender to him, by the offer of a pension, the Wardenship of the Cinque Ports, though he refused, to the disappointment, it is said, of his enemies, to accept the office of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, which James pressed upon him.

Illness of the King.

James did not live to witness his son's marriage. He had been for a long time in failing health, and had been obliged to keep to his apartments during the winter, racked by gout. On March 5th he fell ill of a tertian ague, and though his attendants made light of it, he began at once to fear the worst. On the 12th Chamberlain wrote to Carleton that the fit was not dangerous if the King could only be induced to attend to the advice of his physicians. He was in fact so much better that he was preparing to remove to Hampton Court, when the fits returned and he became rapidly worse. On the 23rd Williams was sent for, and was commissioned by Charles to tell the King that his end was near. He received the intelligence bravely. 'I am satisfied,' he said to the Lord-Keeper, 'and I pray you assist me to make ready to go hence to Christ, whose mercies I call for

and hope to find them.' He sank gradually from this date, and died on the 27th.

Charge against Buckingham of having caused the death of the King.

It was believed by thousands at the time[1] that Buckingham had caused the King's death by poison. It is almost superfluous to say that, in all human probability, the charge was entirely unfounded. Buckingham and his mother had, it is true, very indiscreetly administered remedies to the King other than those prescribed by the regular physicians, which had done James no good[2]; but there is no reason to believe that the specifics were not perfectly harmless. The case against Buckingham rested almost entirely upon the statements of Dr. Eglesham, a Court physician, who wrote a virulent pamphlet on the subject, and afterwards offered to retract what he had said for a consideration[3]. His character does not seem to have borne investigation, and his evidence is unsupported by any confirmatory testimony. No poison was found when James's remains were examined, though almost every organ was fearfully diseased. He himself never hinted at any foul play, and Prince Charles was the last person to be a party to so execrable a crime. The best evidence, perhaps, in Buckingham's favour is the entire absence of motive. History has many charges to bring against the Duke of Buckingham, but he may safely be acquitted of having contrived the death of the King who had raised him, while a mere youth, to the highest position of a subject, and had continued to lavish upon him fresh signs of his foolish affection to the very last.

Chapter II.

Accession of Charles I.—Effect on Buckingham's position.—His embassy to France.—The King's marriage.—Meeting of Parliament.—Loan of ships to Richelieu.—Adjourned Parliament at Oxford.—Preliminary attacks upon Buckingham.—His unpopularity.—The Expedition to Cadiz.—Estrangement of England and France.

Increase of Buckingham's influence.

The death of James I did not interrupt or change the course of politics in England, nor did it affect the position of Buckingham as First Minister, except to strengthen his influence and render his will supreme. He passed from the service of a master who at least required to be persuaded, and who might possibly by a great effort have released himself from the sway of his favourite[4], to that

[1] Even by men like Sir John Eliot, Selden, and Lord Bristol. We have to remember, however, that at this time the deaths of great personages were continually attributed to anything but natural causes. The King himself was supposed by many to have had a hand in the death of Prince Harry. People who believed in witchcraft and the sorceries of Dr Lambe were not difficult to be convinced. The only modern historian who does not consider the charge against Buckingham ridiculous is Mr. Brodie, British Empire, vol. ii. 123.

[2] Roger Coke's Detection, vol. i. 175.

[3] Sanderson's James I, p. 593; State Papers, Dom. 1627, vol. xliv.

[4] Ranke, History of England, i. 543.

of a King who adopted his schemes as his own, and had unbounded confidence in his devotion to himself and his ability to govern. Henceforth King and minister worked together without the slightest friction, and it becomes almost impossible to decide whether any specified action is due to Charles or Buckingham. It will always be a problem how this young man—vain, loquacious, immoral, jealous of opposition, and without fixed principles in religion or politics—gained such complete influence over the mind of a King, who, whatever else he may have been, was grave and decorous in private life, reticent above all men, obstinate, and strongly imbued with absolutist theories of government and Arminian principles in religion. Possibly the only explanation is to be found in the community of interests which bound King and favourite together. From the first Charles was resolved to carry out his father's ideas of kingly power in England; and Buckingham, whose position depended, from 1625 onwards, solely on royal favour, was ready to second him in his attempt to enforce those ideas; for he was as little able as the King himself to understand the new needs and changed circumstances of the age in which he lived, or to estimate the strength of the Protestant sympathies and freedom-loving aspirations of the nation. When Charles once persuaded himself that the attacks made by the Commons upon Buckingham were aimed at himself—as indeed they were[1]—nothing could induce him to yield to their demand that he should abandon his minister.

His power over Charles.

Although the accession of Charles was greeted with manifestations of loyalty and great rejoicings[2], caused in part by the King's cool treatment of the Recusants and his devout behaviour at religious services[3], the outlook abroad and at home would hardly have seemed favourable to men less sanguine than himself and Buckingham. In the Low Countries the army supplied to Count Mansfield was wasting away by sickness and famine. Gustavus of Sweden had relinquished for the present all intention of taking part in the war in Germany. Christian IV was willing to come to the aid of the Protestants, but he demanded large supplies from England, where the exchequer was already empty, while the hopes which had been entertained of substantial help from France following on the marriage-treaty were fading away, and Lewis himself, with a civil war upon his hands, seemed more likely to need assistance than to bestow it. For the present, however, Charles was troubled by no forebodings, and believing that the nation would free him from all anxieties by liberal grants of money, he ordered writs to be issued for a new Parliament. At the same time he sent word to Mansfield to take part in the relief of Breda,

Condition of affairs at Charles' accession.

New plans.

[1] Gardiner, England under Buckingham, &c. ii. 57.

[2] 'On Wednesday King Charles was proclaimed, and I know not what the omen of it was, but the joy of the people devoured their mourning. . . . All fears and sorrows are swallowed up in the joy of so hopeful a successor.' Ellis, Original Letters, Series II, vol. iii, 244.

[3] Court and Times of Charles I, vol. i. 8.

and entered into an agreement with Christian IV to supply him with 30,000*l.* a month. Nor was the fleet neglected. Preparations were made for a fleet of 82 ships to assemble at Plymouth, together with a land force of 10,000 pressed soldiers, to take part in an expedition against Spain under Buckingham's command. As regards France, Charles' marriage with Henrietta Maria was celebrated by proxy at Paris on May 1st, and on the same day the prosecutions against the Catholics in England were suspended[1], in spite of the warning which the King had received from his ambassador ten days before, that it was extremely improbable after all that France would lend assistance against Spain.

Buckingham's embassy to France.

Buckingham could not endure to think that the alliance for which he had risked so much should prove of so little value, and trusting once more to his personal influence, he set off on May 14th to persuade Lewis to make peace with the Huguenots and throw himself heartily into the war. With Richelieu's help he succeeded in inducing him to invite the Huguenots to send deputies to negotiate for peace, and although Lewis would not bind himself to make open war against Spain, he promised to give 100,000*l.* in aid of the King of Denmark's plans, to continue the supplies to Mansfield for seven months longer, and to send him 2,000 French cavalry. With these very considerable concessions Buckingham was not satisfied, and he prepared to return to England bitterly disappointed[2]. Before he left France, however, he incurred the resentment of Richelieu and his master by a disgraceful intrigue with Anne of Austria, the neglected wife of Lewis XIII, whom he addressed in terms of passionate devotion and, it must be confessed, not without receiving encouragement from the Queen. The influence of this mad extravagance on the subsequent relations of England and France has been enormously exaggerated[3], but the love-passages between the handsome Englishman and the Queen of France form a characteristic instance of Buckingham's vanity and recklessness.

Buckingham makes love to the Queen of France.

Marriage of the King.

On the 12th of May Henrietta Maria landed at Dover, and four days later, entered London with her husband, amid the greatest enthusiasm of the populace, who as yet knew nothing of the conditions under which the marriage had been concluded. Buckingham had had his way. He had risked everything for the sake of a close alliance with France, without gaining the important advantages he had hoped for. It remained to be seen what the effect would be on England when it became known on what terms the alliance of France, such as it was, had been secured.

[1] State Papers, 1625, vol. ii. 1.

[2] This visit of Buckingham's to Paris occupies an important place in many of the biographies of him, and long descriptions have been given of his magnificence, his superb dresses, and retinue. As a matter of fact, however, Buckingham, having left England in great haste, was obliged to leave behind him all the costly suits which he had prepared for his appearance as the king's representative at the marriage. Vide Gardiner, vol. i. 180 note.

[3] Lingard, ix. 359; Hume, vi. 234; Clarendon, i. 13.

Up to this time there were no murmurs against the influence of the Duke of Buckingham at Court, even Sir John Eliot continuing to be 'wholly devoted to the contemplation of his excellence[1],' while Williams and the Privy Council were completely subservient.

Meeting of Parliament.

In the middle of June, when the dreaded Plague was beginning to settle down upon London, the first Parliament of Charles I met at Westminster. The King had been anxious for an early meeting and seems to have had no idea that his foreign policy, for which an expenditure of 1,000,000*l.* was required, could possibly meet with opposition from Parliament, although its general tenor was exactly what the Commons had deprecated the year before, when Rudyerd had laid down the 'four points.' In reliance upon Buckingham, who had counted upon some brilliant military success to make his schemes agreeable to the English people, the understanding arrived at between James and the House of Commons had been broken.

Silence of Charles about his needs.

Charles began his relations to Parliament by a great blunder, in neglecting to take the Houses into his confidence and explain what engagements he had made. Neither in his speech, nor in the subsequent statements made by the Lord Keeper, was any mention made of the large sums required for the war. It seemed as though Charles and Buckingham, in their extraordinary self-confidence, imagined that the House of Commons would grant all they wished at the slightest hint. They were greatly mistaken. Sir Robert Philips, in supporting a motion for the adjournment of the House until the autumn, on account of the Plague, soon struck an ominous note. 'There is matter for fear,' he said, 'in every part of the State. Before we think on giving now we ought likewise to take an account of that which was last given[2].' The day after, Sir Francis Seymour, the strongest opponent of a war on the Continent, rose to move that the King should be petitioned to put in force the laws against the Recusants, and was supported by Sir John Eliot. It was not until this petition had been sent up to the Lords that the Commons took into consideration the King's vague request for indefinite supplies, and when they did so, they proposed to give one fifteenth and one subsidy only, equivalent to 100,000*l.*, which was exactly a tenth of the sum needed by Charles to fulfil his engagements[3]. In a remarkable speech Philips denied what the King had intimated in his opening words, that the House of Commons was under an obligation to support the war. He commented on the disasters which had attended Mansfield's expedition. 'It was not wont to be so,' he

[1] Forster's Sir John Eliot, i. 200.

[2] Commons' Debates, 1625 (Camden Society), p. 7. There is no mention of these words in the Commons' Journals, i. 800. They were probably omitted on account of their boldness.

[3] He had promised to assist Mansfield at the rate of 240,000*l.* a-year, and Christian IV 300,000*l.* The Dutch had been guaranteed 100,000*l.*, and the fleet required 300,000*l.*

said, 'when God and we held together; witness that glorious Queen who, with less supplies, defended herself, consumed Spain, assisted the Low Countries, relieved France, preserved Ireland[1].' He hoped the King would take these matters into consideration, and concluded by proposing a grant of 150,000*l.* This was agreed to, and thus at the very outset of his reign Charles was met by what was practically a vote of no-confidence. Directly afterwards the ravages of the plague became so alarming that three-fourths of the members returned to their homes. Those who remained were occupied with the first beginnings of that momentous religious question which entered so much into the disputes between Charles and his people. For some years there had been signs in England of a re-action against Calvinism, and a new party had arisen in the Church which, occupying a middle position between Rome and Geneva, and characterized by a certain liberality of thought, and by reverence for outward ceremonial, had found an acceptable theology in the opinions of Cranmer, who taught that all practices might be retained and all doctrines held which were in accordance with the customs of the early Church and not contrary to Scripture. Such a position as this seemed to the country gentlemen and lawyers of the Parliament a mere feeble copy of Rome. Already they had taken notice of the chief exponent of the new Anglican principles, Dr. Richard Montague[2], and a committee was now appointed to report on his books[3].

Grant made by the Commons.

Case of Dr. Montague.

In one way more the Commons shewed their distrust of the King. Since the time of Henry VI, tonnage and poundage had been granted at the accession of each sovereign for his lifetime. In order that time should be given to consider the point raised in the last reign as to whether the Crown possessed an inherent right of levying duties upon merchandise, a bill containing a grant of tonnage and poundage for one year only was sent up to the House of Lords, where however it was allowed to drop.

Tonnage and poundage refused.

Before he adjourned Parliament Charles made another effort to obtain adequate supplies. On July 7th Buckingham called his followers together and urged them to use their best efforts to persuade the House of Commons to give the King an additional grant. Sir John Eliot, who was still on friendly terms with the Lord Admiral, came the next day to remonstrate, and argued that it was extremely inexpedient that any new demand for money should be made when the House had been reduced to one fourth of its numbers[4]. Nevertheless on the same day Sir John Coke, a devoted adherent of Buckingham and chief commissioner for the navy, rose in the House to make a statement of the King's

Sir John Coke's appeal for supplies.

[1] Commons' Debates, 1625, p. 31.

[2] Montague had embodied his views in two works, the 'New Gag for an Old Goose,' and 'Appello Caesarem,' both of which had been approved by James.

[3] Charles replied to the attack on Montague by making him his chaplain.

[4] Forster's Sir John Eliot, i. 298.

needs and to explain how the subsidies of 1624 had been spent. He revealed to the astonished members that no less a sum than 613,000*l.* would be needed to fulfil the King's engagements for the year, and besought them not to allow the King's honour to suffer, pointing out how Buckingham and other ministers had mortgaged their estates to supply money for the needs of the state[1]. He did not ask the House to vote a grant at once, but merely to give some pledge that, when it met again, the King's request should be acceded to. The speech was received in sullen silence and no debate ensued. Three days afterwards the King promised that the Recusancy Laws should be enforced and adjourned Parliament until August.

Parliament adjourned.

This pledge was a sign that Buckingham was wavering about the French alliance, which appeared likely only to cause difficulties in England and to promise no advantages abroad. The King's married life was one long series of quarrels with his wife on domestic concerns, particularly with regard to Henrietta's French retinue[2]. With regard to the Catholics Charles was driven to many subterfuges in order to satisfy the French ambassadors and the English Parliament at the same time. He had declared on July 11th that the Penal Laws should be put into execution, but he had issued a special order the day before for the liberation of all priests in prison in order that they might leave the country with the French ambassador. Still worse underhand dealing was necessary in the matter of the English ships which had been promised to the King of France. It would be tedious to trace out in detail the dishonourable methods by which Buckingham endeavoured on the one hand to satisfy the French by issuing orders for the surrender of the vessels, while at the same time he sought to save himself from offending the Protestants at home by preventing the surrender until peace had been made with the Huguenots. The transactions are enveloped in some obscurity, but this much is plain, that Captain Pennington, the commander of the ships, received two sets of orders, the first bidding him put to sea to surrender the vessels, the second commanding him on no account to allow them to be used against Rochelle[3]. When the French ambassadors grew impatient, Buckingham wrote letters for them to see, in which Pennington was distinctly ordered to give up the ships, but conveyed secret instructions for him to instigate his men to mutiny rather than do so. By trickery of this nature, Charles and Buckingham for a time avoided the fulfilment of the agreement which had been so rashly entered into. At last, however, on June 19th news arrived that the deputies of Rochelle had concluded peace with Richelieu, and the vessels were surrendered, although only

Buckingham begins to be careless about the French alliance.

Loan of the English ships.

Behaviour of Buckingham.

[1] The King had borrowed 20,000*l.*, Buckingham 50,000*l.*, and the other ministers 50,000*l.*

[2] Vide Court and Times, i. 33, 39, 40, 50.

[3] State Papers Dom., May 18th, 1625.

one seaman could be induced to remain to take part in a possible war against Protestants. Buckingham thought that there was no longer any danger that the ships could be used for such a purpose, but as it turned out, the peace of June 15th with the Huguenots proved abortive, and after all his attempts to prevent it, the ships were actually used in the siege of Rochelle.

Parliament at Oxford.

On August 1st Parliament re-assembled at Oxford. This second meeting marks a new period in Buckingham's life, for since his return from Spain, in spite of his ostentation, his almost regal authority, and the failure of Mansfield's expedition, he had not encountered any openly expressed opposition in Parliament. He had enjoyed unusual popularity because he was supposed to have been instrumental in preventing the Spanish marriage. But it was gradually becoming known that the treaty with France included articles in favour of the Catholics little different from those demanded by Gondomar and Olivares; and the release of imprisoned Jesuits, together with the reported employment of English ships at Rochelle, excited the fears of every good Protestant in the kingdom, which soon found expression in the attacks made at Oxford upon the man who was generally considered responsible. At this very moment, however, when Buckingham was about to be assailed for his conduct at home and abroad, he was meditating a second alliance with the Protestant party and was ready to throw to the winds all engagements made with France relating to the Catholics. But it was too late[1], for he had taught the leaders in the House of Commons that he could not be trusted. They had joined with him in 1624 in order to put an end to foreign interference in English affairs, only to find that for his own ends—or rather what he wrongly imagined to be national ends—he had consented to allow another power to dictate the conditions under which the Recusants were to be governed.

Importance of the session for Buckingham.

Increasing unpopularity due to French treaty.

Symptoms of the rising storm were visible during the first few days of the session at Oxford, when complaint was made of a pardon to Jesuits granted two days after Charles had given his pledge about the Penal Laws. Philips attacked the explanation given by Heath, the Solicitor General, that this had been done to please the French ambassador, and Sir Henry Marten recalled the days when England had maintained her power more by fighting than by diplomacy, significantly hinting with regard to Buckingham that 'we were not now in a course of better success, employing so young men as we did.' On August 4th the real business of the session began, when Charles addressed the Houses in the Hall of Christchurch, concealing as before the whole extent of his needs and aims, and dwelling only on the supplies required to equip the fleet. Sir John Coke, however, at his bidding,

Speech of the King.

[1] Before Parliament re-assembled Lord Keeper Williams had warned Charles that 'the Lord Duke had enemies in the House of Commons who had contrived complaints, had made them ready to be preferred, and would spend the time at Oxford about them.' Hacket's Life of Williams, Part II. 14.

'entering into a large discourse,' enumerated the engagements which the King had agreed upon with Mansfield, the Dutch, and Christian IV, but refrained from asking Parliament in direct terms to grant the large amount required. Money for the fleet was demanded, but everything else was merely hinted at, the explanation being that Charles and Buckingham had not courage boldly to ask the Commons to give money for projects of which they disapproved, while at the same time they had a vague hope that the Commons would spontaneously offer what was needed. Nothing was further from the intentions of the House. The day afterwards the effect of the King's reticence and Buckingham's anti-national policy was clearly shown. Sir Francis Seymour openly assailed all that the government had done abroad, and abandoning generalities threw down the gauntlet to Buckingham. 'Since Princes,' he said, 'must see and hear with other eyes and ears, how happy is that King who reposes his council upon men of worthiness, and how unhappy he who rests on one or two and they such as know better how to flatter and beg of him than how to give him good counsel.' Sir Robert Philips fell upon the French treaty. 'What the Spanish articles were, we know,' he said; 'whether those with France be any better, is doubted. There are articles visible and invisible.' In his pointed speech he contended that Buckingham had entered upon schemes which he knew were contrary to the wishes of the House. Let Parliament therefore wash their hands of the whole matter, leaving the responsibility to those who had incurred it, and devoting their attention to the domestic grievances of the nation. The next point at issue was distinctly put forward when another speaker, Edward Alford, showed that the Commons were not bound to supply funds for the recovery of the Palatinate, as they had declared against any such attempt when they passed the Subsidy Act of 1624. Buckingham and Charles had now to face the unpleasant probability that the House of Commons would do nothing to help them to keep their engagements with Count Mansfield and the King of Denmark.

Attacks upon the conduct of Buckingham.

Advice of Philips.

Before the debate was resumed, Buckingham's friends pressed upon him the necessity of a compromise; and, as a result, Sir Nathaniel Rich, one of the more moderate of his followers, brought forward five propositions, of which the most important were that the King should declare against what enemy he meant to make war, in order that the Commons might discuss the matter, and that in case his majesty did go to war he should be advised by a council. These propositions met with considerable support from friends and opponents of the favourite alike, and in the afternoon, according to Sir John Eliot, Buckingham was urged to agree to them. He was invited to reconcile himself to Parliament by withdrawing all protection from Dr. Montague, by placing himself under the control of a council, and by sending out the fleet under some other commander than himself. But no hope was held out that Charles might keep his

Attempt to bring about an accommodation.

engagements with his allies on the Continent, and Buckingham could not bring himself to consent to such an accommodation as that proposed. On one point, however, he was willing to conciliate the Parliament. Imagining that if concessions were made to the religious fanaticism of the Commons, all other difficulties would vanish, he determined to abandon the Catholics, even at the risk of offending Lewis. On Sunday, August 7th, Buckingham laid down the extraordinary doctrine that the treaty entered into with France was not binding, inasmuch as he had it on the assurance of La Vieuville and Richelieu that the conditions relating to the Recusants were demanded in order to satisfy the Pope. In this opinion the Privy Council, either from choice or from knowledge that opposition to Buckingham was useless, coincided. Sanguine of the results which a change of attitude towards the Catholics would produce, Buckingham addressed the Houses at Christchurch, and announced that the King would order the full execution of the Penal Laws. He then passed on to review his foreign policy, and pointed out how Spain had been checked, the Valtelline recovered, and the war transferred to Italy; how Denmark was raising large armies, the princes of Germany taking heart, and the King of France at war with Spain. There were rumours, he said, that he had forfeited the favour of the Commons. To these he gave no credit. He was sure of his own integrity and devotion to the State, and would trust to their justice to acquit him as a 'faithful, true-hearted Englishman.' The rest of his speech was a decided answer to the charges brought against him. He declared that nothing had been done without the advice of a council; and as for the subsidies of 1624 they had been disbursed by the Commons' officials. It was untrue that the fleet was not intended to sail; its departure was only delayed by want of money. He was sorry that Parliament had been called together when the plague was raging, but everything ought to give way to the urgent necessities of the nation. Some complained that English ships had been lent to the King of France. It was not fit that kings should give account of their counsels, but they might judge whether they were intended to be used against the Protestants of Rochelle by the event. He was accused of having entered into conditions with France worse than those formerly agreed upon with Spain. His answer to that was the King's reply to their petition which he had just read. Finally, Buckingham sketched out a scheme for the future. The sums needed by the allies were no doubt too heavy for the nation to furnish for any long time; but if the King of England made a diversion with his fleet, there would be hope of dividing the forces of Spain, and gaining an easy victory. Besides, a naval war with Spain would be profitable, and he would promise letters of marque to all who desired them. The Commons might themselves name the enemy, only let the fleet be made ready to sail; let them put the sword into the King's hands and he would maintain the war.

Buckingham's speech was marked by entire sincerity, and was

Buckingham resolves to adopt a Protestant policy.

His defence of himself.

Replies to accusations.

Future policy.

in many respects skilfully worded, but it failed to justify his conduct of affairs. It might be true that he had consulted the Council on matters of military detail, but the real question was whether the policy of the government and the great principles by which its administration was guided were not decided upon by Buckingham alone. It was hard to believe, for instance, that any Council would have counselled the suspension of the Penal Laws against the will of the nation, or would have entered into treaties with foreign governments to supply them with large sums of money with an empty exchequer. With regard to Buckingham's answer about the ships lent to France, it was not long before he was condemned out of his own mouth when news came that the vessels were actually taking part in the blockade of Rochelle. In one point, at least, Buckingham showed the weakness of his position. He had stated what the King's engagements were, and his statement had been supplemented by a full declaration from the Lord Treasurer. Nevertheless he merely asked the Commons to grant additional supplies for the equipment of the fleet. How then did Buckingham expect that England was to fulfil the engagements which had been agreed to, on the strength of which Christian IV at least was preparing to take part in the war? He had no intention of withdrawing from the alliances which had been set on foot, but his sanguine temper found a ready solution of all difficulties in the victory which, in his imagination, was already won over the fleets of Spain. No other defence is needed for the persistent opposition offered to Buckingham by Eliot, Philips, and Seymour than is afforded by this one fact, that at a critical juncture the chief statesman of England was willing to depend for the sinews of war upon a prospective capture of the treasure-ships of Spain.

Weakness of his defence.

His hopes of a naval victory over Spain.

The competency of Buckingham for the task of government was really the question on which Charles and the Parliament were at issue. After all, the Commons were not debating whether 40,000*l.* or 400,000*l.* should be voted for the war, but whether any supplies ought to be entrusted to the Lord Admiral's management. Accordingly, when Charles sent down a message to the House urging an immediate grant, and promising to call Parliament together again in the winter, he met with a firm refusal. Sir Robert Philips went further. He ridiculed the idea of resting the hopes of the nation on the chances of a successful naval victory over Spain, and declared that if it were true, as suggested, that the King's honour was endangered, those who had brought him into such a strait had dishonoured their sovereign and should be dealt with according to the precedents of Henry III and Richard II. Apparently he did not believe that the Council had been consulted on the great questions of foreign policy, as he challenged Sir Robert Mansel, a member of the House and of the Council, to declare how far advice had been given. In answer, Mansel said that he had not been present at any meeting since February. He had opposed the scheme of levying 10,000 men for the expedition

Last proceedings of Parliament.

Discontent with Buckingham.

to Spain, and had been told by Lord Conway that that was not a question for debate. His words made a great impression, which was increased when news arrived of Captain Pennington's return and of the intention of the French to use his vessels against Rochelle. Reports too had come in of piracies committed openly in the English Channel and of the sufferings of English seamen captured by Moorish privateers. The anger of the House could no longer be restrained. 'Let us lay the fault where it is,' exclaimed Sir Francis Seymour; 'the Duke of Buckingham is trusted, and it must needs be in him or his agents.'

Dissolution of Parliament.

Charles' reply to this hardly concealed attempt to assert the doctrine of ministerial responsibility to Parliament was decisive. In spite of the advice of Williams and the entreaties of Buckingham, who was ready to meet his assailants, the King refused any longer to endure the interference of the House of Commons, and on August 12th Parliament was dissolved. The great conflict between Crown and Parliament had begun, only to be terminated by the Revolution of 1688. The quarrel was inevitable, perhaps, but it would be difficult to deny that the course which it took at this period was largely influenced by the personal character of the Duke of Buckingham.

Disgrace of Bishop Williams.

One important consequence followed immediately from the short session at Oxford. The most sagacious politician in the King's Council, whose strong common sense and worldly wisdom might have saved Charles from many mistakes, was dismissed. Lord Keeper Williams had been for some time in disfavour both with Charles and Buckingham. He had disapproved of the concessions to the Catholics at the beginning of the reign, had not been enthusiastic about the war with Spain, and had unwillingly consented to the adjournment of the Parliament to Oxford. Moreover he had opposed the gross violation of the French treaty, and had tried to prevent the dissolution of Parliament in August. Some courtier having conveniently reminded the King that Williams had only been entrusted with the Great Seal provisionally for three years by James, he was now driven to resign, and was succeeded by Sir Thomas Coventry.

Preparations for the Spanish expedition.

The favourite's chief hope of conciliating the Parliament and regaining his popularity rested on the chances of a great naval victory over the Spaniards and the capture of the treasure-fleet. He had persuaded himself that these were certainties, and that after a brilliant success over the hated enemies of Protestantism his path would be made easy. Parliament would grant him liberal supplies, and he would be enabled with the spoils of the West Indies to subsidize his allies on the Continent. Immediately after the dissolution of Parliament, therefore, the preparation of the fleet was rapidly pushed on, and a treaty was signed with the Dutch by which they agreed to blockade the Flemish harbours and to send a contingent to the English fleet. Charles now openly broke with Spain by recalling his minister at Brussels.

Since the month of May vessels had been collecting at Plymouth, and levies of pressed men, mostly the refuse of the population, had assembled, only to have their numbers thinned by sickness and desertions. The troops, if so they might be called who had never had arms in their hands, were in as miserable plight as Mansfield's in the previous year. Money was wanting, and as the Devonshire farmers refused to feed the men billeted upon them without hope of payment, the half-starved wretches were obliged to support themselves by robbery and pillage[1]. No attempt seems to have been made to convert them into drilled soldiers[2], for at the end of August the arms were still on board the vessels in harbour. The officers whom Buckingham appointed were, from a military point of view, little better than the men under their command. The favourite had relinquished the idea of leading the expedition himself, and appointed Sir Edward Cecil, a nephew of the Earl of Salisbury, who had served under the Dutch, but was entirely ignorant of naval matters, his chief recommendation for his post being that he was a devoted follower of Buckingham. The Vice-Admiral, the Earl of Essex, and the Rear-Admiral, the Earl of Denbigh, who had married Buckingham's sister, were equally ignorant of the sea. Buckingham, however, was sanguine of success, and Cecil was created Viscount Wimbledon before he sailed, in anticipation of victory. The commander himself, on the other hand, disheartened by the want of enthusiasm amongst his men, and the inefficiency of the officers, took a despondent view of the expedition from the first[3].

Disorders among the levies.

Commanders of the fleet.

On October 8th the fleet upon which Charles and Buckingham relied to overthrow the power of Spain and win back the regard of the English people, put to sea, and anchored a fortnight afterwards in Cadiz Bay. Here the Earl of Essex in a single vessel distinguished himself by putting to flight a whole fleet of Spanish ships, but being unsupported he was unable to follow up his advantage, and the enemy found a safe refuge within the inner harbour of Cadiz. Wimbledon, ignorant that Cadiz itself was only garrisoned by 600 men, gave orders on the following day that the ships should be attacked. Essex, in the Swiftsure, backed by other vessels of the Royal Navy, opened fire briskly on Fort Puntal, which guarded the entrance to the harbour, but the merchantmen, who formed the bulk of the fleet, could not be induced to venture into danger, and contented themselves with firing from behind the King's ships until one of them sent a shot through the stern of the Swiftsure, and caused Essex angrily to order them to desist. It was not until the troops landed that Fort Puntal capitulated. While the Earl of Denbigh directed thi

The exploits of the expedition.

Capture of Fort Puntal.

[1] State Papers Dom. 1625, vol. vi. 3. 23.

[2] State Papers Dom. vi. 36. Cecil to secretary Conway, 'If His Majesty comes before ten days, we shall not be able to shew them anything worthy of their sight. An army is no nimble body, and we found not a soldier armed.'

[3] Cabala, Part I, 371.

attack upon the ships, Wimbledon himself with the troops, conducted one of the most extraordinary marches in military annals. It had been reported to him at midday on the 24th that a strong body of Spanish soldiers was making its way from the north to attack him. To obviate being placed between this force and the town Wimbledon, without providing any provisions for his famished soldiers, who had not tasted food since the day before, proceeded to meet the enemy, who retired at his approach. After a march of six miles, no force being discovered, Wimbledon still directed his men to continue. 'It seemeth,' he said, 'that this alarm is false. But since we are thus forwards on our way, if you will, we will march on. It may be that we may light on some enemy[1].' An enemy was indeed speedily found. The houses in the vicinity were stored with wine for the West Indian fleets, and Wimbledon, taking pity on the exhausted condition of his men, ordered a cask to be opened. Within a short time casks were broached freely, and the greater part of the English army was helplessly drunk[2]. When Wimbledon returned the next morning to Fort Puntal, he found that as the harbour was strongly fortified, the attack on the Spanish vessels had been abandoned. As Cadiz was considered impregnable and the arrival of the Plate fleet was expected daily, the English armament put to sea, having effected nothing. From this time until the 16th of November a look-out was kept for the treasure-ships, which however, having received warnings, had taken a different course further to the south, and succeeded in entering Cadiz Bay in safety two days after Wimbledon quitted it. In the meantime the English vessels were found to be almost unseaworthy, and the provisions so unwholesome that sickness was rife in the crews. It was with considerable difficulty, and after some lapse of time, that in scattered sections the great armament which had been intended to dazzle a nation and convert a Parliament by its victories, regained the shelter of the English harbours. The blame of this ridiculous failure must, ultimately, rest with Buckingham, who was responsible for the absence of design in the expedition, for the appointment of an utterly incompetent commander, and for the widespread corruption and disorganization of the public service, which were the chief causes of the want of success.

Wimbledon's march.

Expedition leaves Cadiz Bay.

Escape of the treasure ships.

While Wimbledon was absent at Cadiz, Buckingham proceeded on a mission to the Hague, to strengthen the alliance of England with the Protestant powers, which was now the aim of his policy. It had been expected that a great congress would take place, but Sweden and the princes of North Germany held aloof, and the only result was a treaty between England, Denmark, and the States, by which Buckingham again bound himself, in spite of the attitude of Parliament in the last session, to supply Christian IV with the 30,000*l.* a month originally promised. Buckingham had intended to pass on to Paris, but was refused permission to enter France.

Buckingham at the Hague.

[1] From Wimbledon's Journal; vide Tanner Papers, 72.
[2] Forster, vol. i. 457.

The new policy.

During the last few months of 1625, Charles and his minister were engaged in carrying out the new policy, of which the repudiation of the obligations to the Catholics was the first symptom. They had set themselves the task of conquering public opinion, and gaining the support of the nation in their designs. It would have been a wise policy if it had been entered upon earlier, but as it was, it could only be followed by estrangement from France, and possibly a war with that country.

France was now more willing than England to join against Spain, but Buckingham assumed a lofty tone, demanded the restoration of the English ships, and the conclusion of peace with the Huguenots, who, if this failed, were promised the protection of the English king. Many causes, some personal, some of wider scope, led gradually to a breach of friendly relations between the two countries. Charles had never forgiven the employment of the English ships at Rochelle. His domestic troubles had reached a crisis owing to disputes about Henrietta's household. The king wished to place Buckingham's mother and wife in attendance on the Queen, and threatened to expel her French retinue from England. The disagreement between Charles and his consort was a small thing, but it was partly caused by Henrietta's anger at the treatment of the Catholics, against whom towards the end of the year severe orders were issued. Not only were all priests commanded to leave the kingdom, but the laity too were to be prosecuted. All recusants were to be disarmed, and fines to be strictly levied to form a fund for the defence of the realm. In September, however, a more serious difference with France had arisen, when a number of French vessels had been captured and brought to Plymouth, on pretence that they carried on board goods for the use of the Spanish Netherlands. There were many reasons why an inquiry should have been held to decide the question, but Buckingham and the King, needing money very greatly, confiscated all the specie in the vessels, and ordered goods to be sold, before any inquiry had taken place. This outrage was soon followed by reprisals on the part of the French. Still more irritating was Charles' attitude to the Huguenots. He had imitated Lewis in his assertion of the right of a foreign king to interfere in religious matters between a sovereign and his subjects. Charles believed that he himself had partly contributed to the sufferings of Rochelle, and was determined at all risks to support the Huguenots against Lewis, unless favourable terms were conceded. At the beginning of 1626, with one war already on his hands, he resolved to relieve Rochelle, and the Council issued orders for the preparation of a fleet, of which Buckingham was to take command.

Causes of estrangement between England and France.

Seizure of French vessels.

Charles' attitude to the Huguenots.

Chapter III.

The Second Parliament of Charles I.—Impeachment of Buckingham.—End of the alliance with France.—Expedition to the Isle of Rhè.—Arbitrary government in England.—Continued schemes of Buckingham.—The Parliament of 1628.—The Petition of Right.—Murder of Dr. Lambe.—Assassination of Buckingham.—His character.

1626.

Hopes from the meeting of Parliament.

In spite of the disastrous issue of the expedition to Cadiz, upon the success of which Buckingham had relied to bring him popularity with the English people, he looked to the Parliament of 1626 to release him from the difficulties which surrounded him. Charles and his minister thought that as they had entirely abandoned the English Catholics, in defiance of the French treaty, and undertaken to protect the Protestants of Rochelle, while, in friendly alliance with the Dutch, they were also at war with Spain, it could not be but that Parliament would be eager to give them hearty support. One precaution, however, which they had taken was little calculated to conciliate the House of Commons; for the leaders of the opposition in the last Parliament, Coke, Philips, Seymour, Alford, and even Sir Thomas Wentworth, had been appointed to serve as Sheriffs, and were thus incapacitated from taking their seats as members of Parliament. 'The rank weeds of Parliament are rooted up,' wrote Sir Benjamin Rudyerd, 'so that in the next we may expect plentiful harvest[1].' Nevertheless, the spirit of opposition to Buckingham which had shown itself at Oxford in the half-concealed allusions of Seymour and Philips, was now about to burst forth in a storm of indignation, ending in the favourite's impeachment at the bar of the House of Lords.

Leadership of Sir John Eliot.

Great surprise was manifested when Sir John Eliot, the personal friend of Buckingham[2], and his Vice-Admiral in Devonshire, driven by the events of the last few months to despair of the minister's capacity, and seeing in him the sole cause of the nation's disasters, assumed the leadership of the opposition in the House of Commons, and became Buckingham's most powerful adversary. Eliot had good cause to doubt the efficiency of the administration. He knew how, owing to mismanagement and corruption, the soldiers pressed for the expedition to Cadiz, had been left in the depth of winter to die of exposure from want of clothing, or to perish from insufficiency of food[3]. It had become known also that the ships which had been fitted out were scarcely sea-worthy, badly rigged and badly provisioned, while Sir John Bagge and other officials appointed by Buckingham had made their profits from the

Reasons of Eliot's opposition.

[1] State Papers, 1625, Nov. 23.

[2] Buckingham had travelled with Eliot during his sojourn abroad, and the two had become friends.

[3] Vide State Papers, xii. 18, 22. Eliot wrote to Conway, 'Yesterday seven men fell down dead in the streets. The rest are weak, and unless there be a present supply of clothes, there is little hope to recover them.'

sufferings of Englishmen. And now when Parliament was opened, when no word was said about the failures of the past, nor any hope held out that mismanagement would be prevented in the future, Eliot could no longer allow personal friendship to hinder him from attacking the minister, at whose door he believed that the humiliation incurred during the last winter manifestly lay. It was Buckingham who had appointed the incompetent Wimbledon as commander of the Spanish expedition, who had filled the subordinate posts with his own nominees, who had despatched a fleet with tackle that would not work, with provisions that the sailors could not touch, at a time of year when failure was almost inevitable. As for the change in the religious policy of Charles and Buckingham, Eliot was filled only with indignation at what seemed to him a barefaced attempt to bribe the Parliament to grant supplies by yielding to its wishes regarding the Recusants.

His speech on the state of the nation.

On February 10th, Eliot made a memorable speech in arraignment of the government. After demanding that an enquiry should be made into the expenditure of the subsidies of 1624, he passed on to the subject of which all were thinking, the late disastrous expedition to Spain. 'Sir, I beseech you,' he said, 'cast your eyes about! View the state we are in; consider the loss we have received; weigh the wrecked and ruined honour of our nation . . . our honour is ruined, our ships are sunk, our men perished; not by the sword, not by the enemy, not by chance; but as the strongest predictions had discerned and made it apparent beforehand, by those we trust[1].' As a consequence of his speech, a Committee of Grievances was immediately appointed with three sub-committees to enquire into separate parts of the administration. On March 3rd, the Council of War were requested to state how the supplies of 1624 had been expended, and also whether the advice they had given had been followed. The Council, afraid that in the event of their refusal to answer supplies would be withheld, unless they took the responsibility upon their own shoulders, offered to brave the Commons' anger and go to the Tower, but Charles interfered[2]. 'It is not you they aim at,' he said, 'but it is upon me that they make requisition.' The demand of the Commons was refused, and on March 10th the King sent them a message requesting an immediate supply.

The Commons wish to question the Council.

Charles demands a supply.

Two courses were now open to the Commons. They might tell the King plainly that no money would be voted until they had reason to believe that it would be well spent. Such a proceeding would have implied that they had lost confidence in his Majesty, and would have been totally opposed to the political ideas of the time, of which the one most universally acknowledged was that the 'king could do no wrong.' The Commons shrank from a declaration of the doctrine of royal responsibility, and thought it

Commons do not directly challenge the King.

[1] Mr. Forster's Life of Sir John Eliot, i. 486.
[2] State Papers, xxii. 51, March 9, 1626.

was possible to gain their end by avoiding the direct issue and bringing a criminal indictment against the Duke of Buckingham. During the sittings of the Committees many facts damaging to him had come to light, and the recent precedents of Bacon and Middlesex had thoroughly established the right of the Commons to impeach ministers of the crown for misconduct.

Speech of Dr. Turner against Buckingham.

The meeting of March 11th shewed plainly what the temper of the Commons was. Dr. Turner, a member hitherto unknown, gave expression to their thoughts when he declared that the cause of all their grievances was 'that great man, the Duke of Buckingham.' It was a matter of common fame, he said, that the Lord Admiral had neglected to guard the narrow seas from piracy, had sold honours and offices, had caused the failure of the expedition to Cadiz, had impoverished the crown, and shewn favour to the Recusants[1]. Four days afterwards Charles summoned the Commons to Whitehall, reproved them sharply for the time spent in inquiring into grievances, and urged the necessity of an immediate grant of money. He went on to refer to the attack on Buckingham, and having reminded his hearers in what favour the duke had recently been held by them, complained that he was now questioned for following out the policy approved by Parliament. He concluded with an ultimatum: 'I would not have the House to question my servants, much less one that is so near me, and therefore I hope I shall find justice at your hands to punish such as shall offend in that kind[2].'

Reprimand of the King.

Eliot's great speech against Buckingham.

On the 27th the Commons at length considered the King's request for a grant, and Sir Benjamin Rudyerd asked for three subsidies and three fifteenths. He was followed by Eliot, who repudiated the argument which some had employed, that England was too poor to supply the King with the money he needed. It was another question whether, in the present condition of affairs, she would be willing. He recalled the disasters which had attended Count Mansfield's army, and the more recent expedition to Cadiz. 'Those enterprises,' he said, 'were undertaken, if not planned and made, by that lord, the Duke of Buckingham. . . We might remember, too, besides these engagements, the treaties and negotiations that have been: the infinite expense they have cost, and nothing returned. Nothing but loss and dishonour to our nation.' Turning to domestic affairs, Eliot went on still further to accuse Buckingham. 'What oppressions have been practised are too visible; not only oppressions of the subject, but oppressions on the King. His treasures are exhausted, his revenues are consumed, as well as the treasures and abilities of the subject, and though many hands are exercised and divers have their gleanings, the harvest and great gathering comes to one[3].' Going back, as the seventeenth-century Constitutionalists constantly did, to the pre-

[1] Gardiner, England under Buckingham, ii. 21.
[2] Ibid. ii. 24.
[3] Sir John Eliot, i. 521.

cedents of the Middle Ages, Eliot reminded the Commons how De Burgh and De la Pole had occupied positions similar to the Duke of Buckingham's; how they had been guilty of similar offences, and how the Commons had refused supplies until they were removed. He concluded by moving that the supplies demanded should be formally promised, but that the grant should not be embodied in a Bill until grievances had been redressed, or, in other words, until Buckingham had been removed from the office of First Minister. This was almost unanimously agreed to, and in spite of all the pressure brought to bear upon them, the Commons never flinched from the position they had now taken up.

Charles declines to abandon Buckingham.

The King, however, knowing that many of Eliot's charges against Buckingham were untrue, and unable to realize his favourite's incapacity for government, had determined to stand by him. On March 29th he severely reprimanded the Commons in a message delivered by Lord Keeper Coventry. He would have them understand the difference between 'liberty of counsel and liberty of control.' They must cease their unparliamentary inquisitions, and if they did not vote a sufficient and unconditional supply, they must not expect the session to continue longer.

Buckingham offers a defence of himself.

Buckingham seems to have thought that this was going too far. He appeared before the Houses next day and having explained away Charles' threat about a dissolution[1], announced that Charles would agree to a Committee of both Houses to examine the state of the finances. Buckingham then offered 'in a fair and submissive speech' a defence of his own conduct. He had done his best, he said, to serve the state since his return from Spain to carry out the policy of the Parliament. As for the loan of ships to the King of France, which had been one of the chief subjects of complaint against him, Buckingham gave the true explanation, declaring that the orders for the surrender of the vessels which the House of Commons had been examining were only artifices to blind the eyes of the French, being countermanded by secret instructions. His explanation, however, was not believed.

The Commons continue their investigations.

The Commons continued steadily in their inquiries, and after Easter the King, thinking probably that Buckingham had an overwhelmingly strong defence, withdrew all opposition to his minister's impeachment. At the beginning of May the Commons sent a message to the House of Lords 'desiring with as much convenient speed as their occasions might permit a conference for impeachment and accusation of a great peer of that House.'

Lord Bristol.

Meanwhile Buckingham was being assailed in another quarter. The Earl of Bristol, who since the King's accession had remained quietly at Sherborne, having received no summons to attend Parliament, petitioned that he might either be restored to his privileges or be placed on his trial[2]. The King, through Buckingham, an-

[1] Lords' Journals, iii. 544.

[2] Camden Miscellany, vi. Preface.

nounced to the Lords that he had issued Bristol's writ of summons but had ordered him not to make use of it[1]. Bristol, ingeniously arguing that he was bound to obey a writ sealed with the Great Seal rather than a communication signed by the Lord Keeper, came to London and petitioned the Lords that he might be heard both in defence of himself and the accusations which he had to bring against the Duke of Buckingham. To prevent his taking his seat Charles now accused him of high treason, and on May 1st he was brought to the bar of the House of Lords. But Bristol objected that this was being done in order to prevent him giving evidence against Buckingham, and to obviate this the Lords decided that the charges against the Duke and the Earl should proceed simultaneously. The trial was still pending when it was interrupted by the Duke of Buckingham's impeachment.

The impeachment.

Before a crowded chamber of both Houses the managers appointed by the Commons appeared, on the afternoon of May 8, with a long indictment of thirteen counts against the chief ruler of England. In their well-meant attempt to bring about the removal of an incompetent minister the Commons laboured under great difficulties, for they refused to recognise the fact that in endeavouring to control the government, they were really proclaiming the doctrine that the King was responsible for his actions to Parliament. They assumed all through that Charles was Buckingham's innocent victim, ignoring the King's reiterated assertions that everything that had been done by his minister was with his consent and approval. The Commons were placed, therefore, in a false position. Having resolved that the acts of the King himself were not to be called in question, they were continually obliged to maintain silence concerning some of Buckingham's schemes, which had clearly been sanctioned by the King himself. Moreover, in very many instances, the Commons were ignorant of the real facts of the case, which were known only to the King and Buckingham, and a small circle of officials. It was owing to this cause chiefly that the managers of the impeachment fell into many mistakes and absurdities. It was no wonder that Buckingham, confident and scornful, did not hesitate to be present at the conference, and to jeer at the wholesale accusations of Sir Dudley Digges, as with ridiculous metaphors and overstrained rhetoric the orator denounced him as the cause of all the evils under which the nation suffered.

Difficulties of the Commons.

First charges.

On the first day of the impeachment eight articles were presented, charging the Duke of Buckingham with accumulating offices of state in his own person, and buying the Admiralty from the Earl of Nottingham and the Cinque Ports from Lord Zouch; with neglecting to guard the narrow seas, extorting 10,000*l.* from

[1] The Lords apparently refused to countenance this artifice, as it is merely entered on the Journals that at the Earl of Bristol's petition the King sent him his writ.

the East India Company, and lending English ships to be used against the Protestants of Rochelle. Some of these charges were very weak. Buckingham was hardly to blame, because King James's foolish affection had brought him a multitude of honours and offices, and it was of little use to complain that Buckingham had paid money to his predecessors in the Admiralty and the Wardenship of the Cinque Ports, when it was notorious that almost every office of state was transferred in the same manner. Of the three important posts which he held, the Mastership of the Horse was a domestic office in the King's household; while as for the others, it was a distinct gain to the nation that they should be held by the same person, rather than that the control over the coasts should be divided between two jurisdictions. Buckingham afterwards declared that he had agreed with Lord Zouch for the surrender of the Cinque Ports from regard to the public good, and remembering his refusal to accept the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland, there is no reason to doubt his sincerity.

Plurality of offices.

There was more to be said concerning the failure of the Lord Admiral to guard the Channel and protect English shipping from the ravages of Dunkirk and Moorish pirates. During the years from 1624 to 1627 the State Papers teem with accounts of ravages committed by Dunkirk cruisers, and the great losses sustained by the English merchants. Buckingham could not deny that the complaints were well justified, but alleged that he had taken due precautions, and that the Dunkirkers had been favoured by storms and the lightness of their build which had prevented the heavy ships of the king's navy from being able to cope with them. There can be little doubt, however, in spite of Buckingham's proved activity in the discharge of his duties, that the navy was shamefully mismanaged by his subordinates, most of whom had been appointed, not so much for their fitness as for their devotion and subserviency to the Lord Admiral.

Failure to guard the narrow seas.

The charge of having extorted 10,000*l.* from the East India Company in 1624 was in the main well founded. The Company having made an attack, in conjunction with the Persians, upon a Portuguese settlement at Ormuz, were supposed to have derived plunder by the raid to the amount of 100,000*l.* In his capacity of Lord Admiral Buckingham demanded from them the sum of 10,000*l.* which would have been due to him if the Company's vessels had sailed under letters of marque. As his demand was resisted Buckingham brought pressure to bear upon the East India Company by inducing the House of Lords to stop the sailing of their fleet at a critical time, and proceeded against them for acts of piracy. Eventually the Company compounded by paying 10,000*l.* to King James and an equal sum to the favourite. There had been some show of legality in Buckingham's actions in this matter, but the whole transaction is a typical instance of the manner in which, under legal forms, the grossest injustice was perpetrated during the reigns of the first two Stuarts.

Extortion from the East India Company.

Loan of ships to France.

In the matter of the loan of ships to the French, the Commons were ignorant of the secret negotiations and ventured on unsafe ground. Buckingham's behaviour had been one long series of disgraceful artifices and was far more damaging to his character than his accusers suspected; but his object had been to prevent that which the Commons charged him with having sought to bring about, the surrender of the vessels to serve against Rochelle. The Commons alleged that, contrary to the King's wish, he had endeavoured to aid the King of France against the Protestants. The truth was, that Charles approved of everything that Buckingham had done and that the latter had not ordered the surrender of the ships until the news of the peace of June 15th induced him to believe that there was no longer any fear that they would be used against Rochelle. He was greatly chagrined when he discovered that, after all, there was no prospect of peace, and that Pennington's squadron was to be employed in blockading the stronghold of the Huguenots.

Minor accusations.

The remaining charges were not very important. The honours and offices conferred on Buckingham's kindred were a notorious scandal, but the blame rested with King James, not with the favourite. As for the immense sums paid to Buckingham, which the Commons supposed to have been used for his own purposes, it is impossible, owing to the confusion of the accounts, to arrive at any certain conclusion; but there seems to be a strong probability that the greater portion of the amount paid to Buckingham was used for state purposes, and that the accusations of the Commons in this respect were enormously exaggerated. The last charge of all, by which Buckingham was accused of having with 'transcendant presumption' administered remedies to the late King contrary to the advice of his physicians, only served to weaken the case of the House of Commons.

Eliot's summing-up.

His speech unjust to Buckingham.

The task of reviewing the accusations in an 'epilogue' had been entrusted to Sir John Eliot, who had been mainly instrumental in conducting the investigations into Buckingham's conduct. His speech was a passionate invective against the favourite, full of exaggerations and misconceptions, but right in the unerring instinct with which Eliot saw that there could be no good government in England while Buckingham was at the helm. He declined to admit that the royal approval absolved a minister from blame. If his Majesty had consented to the loan of the ships against Rochelle, which Eliot would not believe, it was Buckingham's duty to oppose the design, to have addressed himself to the Privy Council, and to have entered his protest against the scheme. In other words, Buckingham, living at a time when ministers were responsible only to the sovereign, should have behaved something in the manner of a modern Cabinet minister. The greater part of Eliot's speech was a powerful attack upon Buckingham's magnificence and profusion as contrasted with the poverty of the crown; but the orator overstepped the limits of truth when he proceeded to accuse

Buckingham of 'sordid bribery' and of attempts on the person of the sovereign, and to compare him in detail to Sejanus. His portrait of Buckingham is not faithful, and bears too close a resemblance to the monster depicted in the popular ballads of the day, in which the favourite was credited with almost every possible failing and vice. Buckingham was weak, vain, arrogant and utterly unfit to be the First Minister of England, but he was not sordid or avaricious; he was very far indeed from being a Sejanus, and the Buckingham of Sir John Eliot is not historical.

Dissolution of Parliament.

Charles's answer to the charges of the Commons was the imprisonment of Eliot and Sir Dudley Digges, who spent one day in the Tower for having 'pressed the King's death, whereas the House had only charged the Duke with presumption.' The House of Lords, however, signed a protest that Digges had said nothing contrary to the King's honour, and as the Commons were resolved to go on with no business until the members were released, Charles was obliged to give way. He contrived in another direction to show his confidence in the impeached minister by securing his election as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, much to the displeasure of the House of Commons. On June 9th the King's demand for an immediate grant was met by a resolution that a statement of the grievances of the nation should have precedence, and before the end of the week, Charles, having finally resolved to shield Buckingham at all risks, dissolved Parliament.

Foreign policy during the year.

While Buckingham was being impeached by the House of Commons, the French alliance, which had been the principal source of his difficulties, had come to an end, and England was threatened with a second war. It is a relief to find that in this instance the folly and shortsightedness are not so much to be attributed to Buckingham as to his master. In spite of the dissensions between the courts of England and France there seemed to be a prospect in the spring of 1626, owing to the exertions of Cardinal Richelieu, that not only might a breach of friendly relations be avoided, but that the alliance against Spain might be made effective. Lewis XIII was now willing to give up the idea of a joint army and to allow his own troops to operate against Spain in Italy, while at the same time aiding the English with money for the war in Germany. As for the quarrel which had arisen about the detention of the 'S. Peter' of Newhaven and the subsequent reprisals, the French merely asked that the vessels seized on both sides should be restored, and a treaty drawn up by which disputes in the future might be avoided. Lewis followed up these conciliatory overtures by ordering his admiral at Rochelle to send home the English ships. But Charles received all these generous offers with studied coldness, for he had quarrelled with the French ambassador Blainville, he was in a state of perpetual quarrelling with his wife, he was not satisfied with the terms to be granted to the Huguenots, and in spite of Buckingham's efforts to bring about a satisfactory understanding, he persisted in refusing to believe in the sincerity of the French government.

Charles really to blame for war with France.

Week by week the chances of an alliance grew fainter, and Richelieu became reluctant to fulfil the conditions of peace which had been held out to the Huguenots, and turned to Spain. On April 30, France and Spain agreed to the treaty of Barcelona, and the alliance for which Charles had broken his word and Buckingham had lost the favour of the English people, ended in nothing except a probability of future war.

Quarrel with the Queen.

Towards the middle of the year the misunderstanding between Charles and his Queen was brought to a crisis by a pilgrimage which Henrietta was reported to have taken to Tyburn, where so many Catholics had died martyrs to their faith. Charles resolved to carry matters with a high hand, and ordered the Queen's French retinue to leave England; and a week afterwards, by Buckingham's help, all her attendants were shipped off to France, a household of English ladies taking their places.

Causes of the war with France.

The seizure of three valuable French vessels in October, on the pretence that they carried Spanish goods, re-opened the maritime difficulty. The French retaliated by taking possession of a fleet of two hundred vessels laden with wine from Bordeaux, and Buckingham, who had again been meditating an embassy to France, was obliged to relinquish his intention. Early in December an order was issued for the seizure of all French vessels in English waters, and on Christmas Eve Buckingham sent secret instructions to Captain Pennington to attack the French fleet at Havre. At the beginning of the year the attitude of the French government changed. Lewis now demanded that the marriage-treaty should be fulfilled in all its conditions, and that the vessels taken by both sides should be liberated. In reply Buckingham wrote to Richelieu that Charles considered himself absolved from all obligations, and as the French had seized English ships without due cause they must be the first to make reparation.

Position of affairs on the Continent and at home, 1627.

War with France was now only a question of time and money, and at the beginning of 1627 Buckingham had to face the prospect of a struggle with the two most powerful Catholic governments, while in Germany Christian IV, owing chiefly to the failure of Charles to keep his engagements, had been utterly routed at the great battle of Lutter, and Count Mansfield, after being defeated by Wallenstein, had died on his way to Venice. Everywhere, at home, abroad, Charles and his minister were met by calamity and difficulties. The exchequer was empty and Parliament had been dissolved in anger. The attempt to gain supplies by means of a forced loan was met by great opposition. Buckingham was besieged by crowds of sailors clamouring for pay, while a commission had to be issued to inquire into the disorganised state of the Navy. The nation, meanwhile, stood aloof, murmuring occasionally breaking out against the Duke of Buckingham.

Nevertheless, there was no thought of making peace or yielding to the will of the nation, and all Buckingham's energies were devoted to the preparations for a great expedition to relieve Rochelle.

Preparations for the expedition to Rhè.

Buckingham had posed as chief favourite at court, as administrator, ambassador, and First Minister. He was now to show what he could accomplish as a commander of men. All through the spring the preparations for his expedition were going on in England, but they were delayed, as before, by the extreme want of money, by the bad management of officials, and above all by the absence of enthusiasm in the country for the success of any armament directed by the Duke of Buckingham. The majority of the soldiers furnished by the county of Hampshire, for instance, were such base rogues that they were disbanded as useless [1]. Dorsetshire refused to send any recruits at all or to levy a rate for the support of men on their way to Portsmouth. It was not until the beginning of June that the Lord Admiral could think of setting sail. When at last he went on board, he had collected a fleet of 100 vessels and over 6000 troops, including a small body of horse [2].

Buckingham's instructions.

His instructions were, to hand over to the citizens of Rochelle a land force sufficient to enable them to resist Lewis, to recover the English ships detained at Bordeaux, and to interrupt the trade of France and Spain. The fleet was directed at once towards the island of Rhè, which not only threatened Rochelle, but also afforded a splendid basis of operations against the commerce of France and Spain. Here, it was thought, the English privateers might gather to attack the French shipping, whose development, under the fostering care of Richelieu, was causing great jealousy in England, and from the island communication might be opened with the discontented populations of the south of France.

Disembarkation at St. Martin's.

On July 10th Buckingham anchored off St. Martin's, the chief town of the Isle of Rhè, and having despatched envoys to Rochelle began two days afterwards to disembark his troops, who, being wearied with the long voyage and for the most part raw recruits terrified at the prospect of a speedy engagement with the French, could hardly be persuaded to leave the ships. Their commander, however, hurried from vessel to vessel, making appeals to the courage of some and the fears of others, and at length his men landed in bad order and broken clusters on the shore.

Attack of the French cavalry.

Suddenly a body of French cavalry sent by Toiras, the French general who held St. Martin's, fell upon the English troops, and at first met with but little resistance [3]; but Buckingham, who was occupied in completing the disembarkation, hastened back, and with the help of his colonels, Sir John Burgh and Sir Alexander Brett, succeeded in rallying his soldiers before the French infantry came up, and beating back the horsemen, who left half their number dead upon the ground. Soon afterwards Buckingham discovered that the Rochellese were by no means so enthusiastic about his arrival as he had anticipated [4]. Before they would return any answer

[1] State Papers, May 1, 1627.
[2] Expedition to the Isle of Rhè, by Lord Herbert of Cherbury, chap. v.
[3] Court and Times of Charles I, i. 256.
[4] Letter of Soubise to Buckingham, S. P. Dom. 1627, lxxi. 74.

to his proposals they wished to consult their fellow-Protestants outside the city, and for the present Buckingham had to be content with receiving a scanty reinforcement of 250 men. By the letter of his instructions he should have turned to other enterprises if he found that the defenders of Rochelle did not need assistance, but having landed his troops in the face of the enemy it was hardly possible to withdraw from the island, and on the 17th he determined to lay siege to St. Martin's. His difficulties now began, for the fort was held by a strong garrison, the ground was unfavourable for a siege[1], and already his officers were beginning to chafe under the command of a man destitute of all military experience. It soon became clear that St. Martin's could not be taken by assault, and must be reduced by the slow process of famine. As the Duke of Angoulême was collecting a strong army on the mainland and threatening to send help to Toiras, Buckingham at once wrote home for reinforcements, while he proceeded to invest St. Martin's as completely as possible. The fleet guarded the approaches by sea, and by the middle of August Buckingham had drawn his lines round the fort. The besieged were known to be short of provisions, and to increase their difficulties, the English drove the wives and daughters of the garrison before the walls of St. Martin's and compelled the French commander to admit them by firing upon them[2]. This barbarous act of cruelty was afterwards denied in the English account of the expedition, but is only too well authenticated. In the meantime the ranks of the besiegers were rapidly being thinned. The Rochellese drew nearer to Buckingham owing to the threatening attitude of the King's army, but were unable to send substantial help, and the allies in the south of France, upon whose assistance Buckingham had relied, had as yet done nothing, so that reinforcements were fast becoming a vital necessity[3]. Charles did his best at home, but the exchequer was again empty. French prizes, from which the money for the expedition had been largely raised, were no longer to be obtained, as the enemy's ships, in wholesome fear of the English fleet, kept to their harbours. A sum of 240,000*l.*, which had been collected by a forced loan, was needed to pay off pressing debts. It was not until August 13th that the King was able to write to Buckingham that supplies and money should reach him within eight days, and September was at an end before his promise was fulfilled. By this time the besieged garrison of St. Martin's were enduring the last extremities of famine, and Buckingham was taking every precaution to prevent the arrival of succour from the mainland[4]. On the 27th of Sep-

Buckingham resolves to besiege St. Martin's.

Investment of the fort.

Necessity of reinforcements.

Offers of surrender.

[1] Hardwicke State Papers, ii. 27.

[2] Vide Isnard's Arcis Sammartinianae Obsidio. The French author's assertion is confirmed by letters written from the English camp, which also relate that the wells of the besieged were poisoned. State Papers, August 15th, 1627.

[3] Hardwicke State Papers, ii. 38.

[4] Ibid. ii. 47.

tember there was great rejoicing in the English camp when it became known that an offer had been made to surrender the fort on the following day. Before the next morning, however, the garrison was relieved and all Buckingham's labour had been in vain. The night of the 27th had been dark and stormy, and taking advantage of a favorable wind, a flotilla of thirty-five boats, guided by the fires lighted in the fort, made a determined effort to break through the lines of the English fleet. The hawsers upon which Buckingham had relied to prevent ingress gave way at a weak point, and twenty-nine boats, laden with provisions, passed through in safety[1]. All endeavours to destroy them by fire-ships failed, and a council of war was held to decide whether the siege was to be continued. Buckingham had reluctantly given his consent to its abandonment when offers of assistance came from Rochelle together with news of reinforcements from England. In reliance upon these Buckingham decided to continue the blockade[2]. He hoped that before long the Duke of Rohan, who had been for some time planning a rising of the Huguenots, would be able to hold in check the royal army and prevent the landing of a French force on the island.

Relief of St. Martin's.

Every nerve was strained by Charles to forward the promised reinforcements, but he was not supported by the nation, and the feeling against Buckingham grew stronger day by day. Even his wife wrote that he was no more popular than before he left England to succour the Huguenots, and that he was venturing his life in vain. The Countess of Buckingham was more severe. 'I hope your eyes will be opened to see,' she wrote, 'what a great gulf of business you have put yourself into, and so little regarded at home, where all is merry and well-pleased, though the ships be not victualled as yet nor mariners to go with them. As for moneys, the kingdom will not supply your expenses, and every man groans under the burden of the times[3].' As Sir Humphry May informed his chief, 'It is easy for us to set down on paper ships, and money, and arms, and victuals, and men, but to congest these materials together, especially in such a penury of money, requires more time than the necessity of your affairs will permit.' While the position of Buckingham grew serious, the reinforcements which would have prevented all fear of a landing of French troops were hindered, first by want of money, and afterwards by a great storm[4], from coming to his relief. On October 28 letters from Buckingham reached London, announcing that if supplies arrived in time he would remain on the island; if not, he would throw himself into Rochelle. Before he wrote 2000 French troops had passed over from the mainland and entrenched themselves in the fort of La Preè. An attempt to storm St. Martin's ended in a miserable

Difficulty in obtaining reinforcements.

Landing of French troops.

[1] State Papers, Dom. lxxx. 23. Isnard, 164.
[2] Hardwicke State Papers, ii. 49, 52.
[3] State Papers, Dom. lxxx. 22.
[4] Ibid. vol. lxxxii *passim*.

The Retreat from Rhè.

failure, and Buckingham at last made up his mind to retreat. His decision came a day or two late. On October 29, more French troops having arrived, Marshal Schomberg, at the head of 6000 men, advanced to attack the English. The retreat which ensued was signalized by a great disaster. It had been arranged that the troops should embark from the small island of Loix, which had been united to Rhè by a wooden bridge. By some error the end of the bridge nearest to Rhè was left undefended by any entrenchments, and when half the English army had passed over, the French charged the handful of horsemen[1] who guarded the passage, swept them away, and fell upon the infantry, while simultaneously the three regiments which had not crossed the bridge were assailed by another body of French in the rear. What followed was little but a hideous massacre, in which from 1000 to 2000 of Buckingham's men lost their lives. The rest maintained themselves in the entrenchments on the further side of the bridge, and on the next day the remainder of Buckingham's army embarked in safety. On November 8, out of 7000 troops who took part in the expedition, barely 3000 men, worn out by fatigue and sickness, landed in England. Buckingham's last military scheme had proved a more conspicuous failure than Wimbledon's expedition to Cadiz in 1625.

Buckingham's conduct during the expedition.

While this ill-fated attempt to relieve Rochelle illustrates forcibly the strong and the weak elements in Buckingham's character, it proves that the popular estimate of him was unjust. Buckingham showed that the charge of cowardice brought against him in ballads and broadsides[2] was altogether false, for no veteran could have shown more coolness and courage in action. He displayed in the conduct of the expedition the same unwearied, restless activity[3] which distinguished him in politics, and on the day of the landing at Rhè it was his presence only, urging on his men, reproving and encouraging, which saved the army from disaster at the outset. The great Marlborough himself was not more careful for the lives, the health and comfort of his troops than Buckingham, who with his own hands tended the wounded, and on one occasion risked his life to save a poor soldier surrounded by the rising tide. No one was more magnificent and luxurious in his habits at home in England. Yet at Rhè, Buckingham shared the toils of the common soldier, sleeping in a cloak in the open field. Vanity was his chief fault, but in despatches he hardly mentioned the attempt on his life by a Jesuit, while he dwelt earnestly on the necessity of supplies for his starving troops. As for military capacity, it would

[1] Isnard, p. 233.

[2] Vide poems in vol. xxix of the Percy Society's publications, 24:—

'These things have lost our honour, men surmise,
Thy treachery, neglect and cowardice.'

'For when he came to land (Page 16,)
The soldiers that were starting,
He stood behind and backed them so
That they have won St. Martin.'

[3] Vide S. P. Dom. lxxii. 18.

have been wonderful if, inexperienced as he was, he had committed no faults; yet the failure of the expedition to Rhè was probably entirely due to the storm which prevented the despatch of reinforcements due in October.

Buckingham's return.

The first intelligence Buckingham received on his arrival in England was the report of a conspiracy to murder him, which however proved false, although it was a symptom of his ever-increasing unpopularity. Charles received him cordially, throwing the blame of the failure on his subordinates at home, but outside the limits of the Court the Duke of Buckingham was everywhere regarded as being solely responsible for 'the greatest and shamefullest overthrow since the loss of Normandy.' He had received little sympathy in his efforts on behalf of the Protestants of Rochelle, and now that he had failed no one ventured to say a good word for the man who had been defeated by the traditional enemy of England.

State of England.

More than ever the people murmured against the injustice of the forced loan levied by Charles in default of Parliamentary grants, and against the illegal billeting of soldiers upon their homes. It was no longer possible to excuse these unconstitutional acts on the plea that the House of Commons were united in a factious opposition to a minister who deserved well of the nation and to measures demanded by the best interests of England. No Parliament was summoned, although Buckingham besought Charles to issue writs, and not to spare him, if he were found worthy of punishment. The King declared that he could not wait for the meeting of a Parliament, and continued the policy of government by prerogative. No thought of making peace was entertained for a moment, either by himself or Buckingham.

New schemes.

A fleet of one hundred sail was to be made ready for the following summer, and a standing army of 11,000 men kept in readiness to be sent to Rochelle, or to the assistance of the King of Denmark. To raise money for these schemes, various methods were proposed, of excise duties, of ship-money levied on all the counties, but each was abandoned in turn, and at last Charles agreed that Parliament should be summoned. There was great need, for Rochelle was perishing, and the Earl of Denbigh's fleet for the relief of the city could not put to sea from the disorganization that everywhere prevailed owing to the want of money.

1628. Meeting of Parliament.

In the first proceedings of the Parliament which presented the Petition of Right, the Duke of Buckingham was ignored. In spite of the wishes of Sir John Eliot, it was decided that, for the present, the attack upon him should be suspended, for the late proceedings of Charles had forced home the conclusion that the quarrel of the nation was with him even more than with his minister. Until the Petition of Right was granted, the Duke's name was hardly mentioned in the House of Commons.

Buckingham opposes the Petition of Right.

In the House of Lords, Buckingham opposed, in vain, the resolutions of the House of Commons, for his will was no longer supreme with the Peers, and he was almost alone in his endeavours to throw out the clauses of the

Petition. When at length the King, in answer to the Petition, willed 'that right be done according to the laws and customs of the realm: and that the statutes be put in due execution, that his subjects may have no cause to complain of any wrongs or oppressions contrary to their just rights and liberties, to the preservation whereof he holds himself in conscience as well obliged as of his prerogative,' the Commons traced in this the hands of Buckingham, and at once the old quarrel against him blazed forth. Eliot removed his attacks on the favourite's foreign policy, and especially against the French War. 'What waste of our provisions, what consumption of our ships, what destruction of our men have been!' he cried. 'Witness the journey to Algiers! Witness that with Mansfield! Witness that to Cadiz! Witness the next! Witness that to Rhè! . . . . We were never so much weakened, nor had less hope to be restored!' He demanded that a Remonstrance should be presented to the King, containing a statement of the nation's grievances. Two days afterwards, in spite of the King's threats, the Remonstrance was proceeded with and Coke rose to speak. 'I think,' he said, 'the Duke of Buckingham is the cause of all our miseries, and till the King be informed thereof, we shall never go out with honour, or sit with honour here. That man is the grievance of grievances. Let us set down the causes of all our disasters and they will reflect upon him.' Then Selden proposed that Buckingham's impeachment should be revived. Meanwhile representations had been made to the King by the House of Lords; and on June 7th, amid the applause of the Commons, Charles gave a full assent to the Petition of Right, and the second great Charter of English liberties was won. Nevertheless, although the idea of impeaching Buckingham was dropped, the Commons proceeded with their Remonstrance, and completed it on the 11th of June. After some representations on Arminianism and the disasters of the last three years, the Commons declared that the principal cause of the evils of the nation was the 'excessive power of the Duke of Buckingham and the abuse of that power.' It was not safe that the conduct of so many great affairs should be in the hands of one man. They concluded: 'Our humble desire is further, that your excellent Majesty will be pleased to take into your princely consideration, whether in respect the said Duke hath so abused his power, it be safe for your Majesty and your kingdom to continue him either in his great offices or in his place of nearness and counsel about your sacred person.' In drawing up this vote of censure upon Buckingham, the Commons were on far stronger ground than when they tried to bring about his fall by accusing him of criminal offences. But the King would do anything rather than sacrifice his minister to the wishes of men whom he distrusted. Before the Remonstrance was presented an event occurred which inclined him still more to support his favourite, and to believe that the opposition to Buckingham was merely the expression of a movement in England dangerous to himself and

Renewal of the attack upon him by Eliot.

Declaration of Coke.

The Remonstrance.

Charles refuses to abandon Buckingham.

to his throne. He must have been filled with indignation by the atrocious libels on Buckingham, accusing him of poisoning not only King James but a crowd of noblemen, of cowardice at the Isle of Rhè, and of causing the failure of Denbigh's expedition to Rochelle for fear of a peace, which were eagerly caught up and believed by the angry populace. On the 13th of June Dr. Lambe, a man of infamous character, who was the object of great hatred on account of his connection with the Duke of Buckingham, was brutally murdered in the streets of London by a wild mob of ruffians, who declared that if the Duke had been there he should have been worse handled. This outrage seems to have decided the King, and on the 17th he answered the Remonstrance by a curt reply that he would consider the grievances of the Commons as he thought they deserved, and declined to allow Buckingham to make any rejoinder to the charges against him. The Commons followed up their attack on the 'grievance of grievances' by another Remonstrance declaring the collection of tonnage and poundage without the consent of Parliament to be illegal. Charles refused to allow any such Remonstrance to be presented, and on June 26th Parliament was prorogued.

Stories about Buckingham.

Murder of Lambe.

Prorogation of Parliament.

Buckingham was now on the verge of ruin, without one single ray of success at home or abroad to encourage him. Step by step, he and Charles had plunged deeper into the mire, first by outraging the religious sympathies of the nation, then by a foolish and unnecessary war against France, and, above all, by resorting to illegal means in order to carry out projects disapproved of by Parliament.

In July 1628, Buckingham seems to have begun at last to lose faith in himself, and to distrust his ability to conduct war against both France and Spain in defiance of the people of England, who execrated his name and threatened his death. For some time he had attempted to limit his warlike operations, and at home he endeavoured to conciliate the nation by abandoning his office of Warden of the Cinque Ports, and by reconciling himself with Lord Bristol and Bishop Williams[1], who were now received back into the King's favour, while Weston, the advocate of peace and economy, became Lord Treasurer. It seems probable that Buckingham would have been thankful to retrace his steps for the last few years, and to be replaced in the position he had occupied on his return from Spain in 1624 as the champion of a national and Protestant policy[2]. Whatever he may have

Desire of Buckingham to change his policy.

[1] This reconciliation was effected by the Countess of Buckingham, who was filled with anxiety for her son's position.

[2] There is evidence of this in an important letter written after the Duke's death to the Queen of Bohemia by Lord Dorchester, Buckingham's chief confidant. The Lord Admiral had, he wrote, 'a firm resolution to walk new ways, but upon old grounds and maxims, both of religion and policy, finding his own judgment to have been misled by errors of youth and persuasions of persons he began better to know.' S. P. Dom. 1628, cxiv. 17.

Prepares again to relieve Rochelle.

wished to do, there was one plain duty from which he could not escape. Rochelle was suffering all the horrors of a long-continued siege, and England was pledged at all hazards to attempt its relief. Buckingham began earnestly to prepare for another expedition to avert the doom of the fated city. The King held his court near Portsmouth to superintend the fitting out of the fleet, and Buckingham remained in London to hasten on the supplies, which had been so long delayed. He found that there was little confidence in him, or hope of his expedition. 'I find nothing,' he wrote to Conway, 'of more difficulty and uncertainty than the preparations here for this service of Rochelle. Every man says he has all things ready, and yet all remains as it were at a stand[1].

Want of support.

When, therefore, the Venetian ambassador, Contarini, held out hopes that peace might be made with France, Buckingham caught eagerly at the prospect, and it was arranged that the King, Buckingham, and the Ambassador, should meet together on the next day, August 23rd, to take the matter into consideration[2]. The interview, however, never took place, for Buckingham had reached the end of his short and fatal career.

Conference to be held on Aug. 23.

Expectation of Buckingham's death.

Ever since the murder of Dr. Lambe in June, the air had been full of rumours and prophecies pointing to the Duke's speedy death. Lord Clarendon thought the story of the ghost of Sir George Villiers appearing to an officer of Windsor Castle and warning him of his son's approaching death[3] worthy of the dignity of history, and Sir Henry Wotton, after his patron's death, collected evidence which is interesting as showing into what extreme odium Buckingham had fallen, and the fears entertained by his friends for his safety. It may provoke a smile to read in Mead's letters that Lady Eleanor Davis, the prophetess of the day, had given Buckingham until the month of August to live, and that it was an ominous sign for the Duke that his picture had fallen at Lambeth on the day Dr. Lambe was murdered; but such absurd stories are full of meaning, proving as they do that Buckingham was regarded almost universally as the enemy of his country, whose death would be welcomed as a happy deliverance. Buckingham himself, although he resisted the entreaties of his followers to take precautions against assassination[4], was not entirely free from a sense of insecurity, and on taking leave of Laud some days before the 23rd he begged him to commend his wife and children to the King's care. 'Some adventure,' he said, 'may kill me as well as another man.'

He declines to take measures for his safety.

On the 22nd he had a narrow escape at Portsmouth in an affray

[1] S. P. Dom. cxii. 32.
[2] Court and Times, i. 392.
[3] Clarendon's History, i. 58.
[4] When Sir Clement Throckmorton advised him to wear a coat of mail, he answered that such would be no defence against popular fury, and as for a single man's assault he took himself to be in no danger. Wotton's Life, Harl. Misc. viii. 621.

with some mutinous sailors, who resisted the execution of a comrade who had been condemned by a court-martial for an insult to the Lord Admiral. The mutineers were beaten back, but Buckingham had to be escorted by his officers to a place of safety. In vain the next morning his devoted Duchess implored him to take precaution. Without any thought of impending danger he breakfasted with the Duke of Soubise, and was in high spirits owing to the reported relief of Rochelle. On leaving the table to keep his appointment with Contarini, he entered a dark passage leading from the breakfast-room to the central hall, and on stooping to one of his colonels was stabbed to the heart by a man who had concealed himself in the passage. As he struck the Duke heavily with a knife, he exclaimed, 'God have mercy on thy soul!' and escaped, while Buckingham, with an oath, laid his hand on his sword, tottered forward, and died within a few moments. In the confusion that ensued, John Felton, the assassin, made his way into the kitchen, and suspicion fell on the Frenchmen, but Felton, hearing the shouts of 'Where is the villain?' stepped coolly into the hall and surrendered himself. With great difficulty he was rescued from immediate death by Viscount Dorchester and placed in security, while the Duchess of Buckingham, summoned from her apartment to witness the fulfilment of her forebodings, filled the house with frantic cries of grief, remembered by those present all their lives through[1].

Mutiny at Portsmouth. Aug. 22.

Buckingham's assassination, Aug. 23.

The news of Buckingham's assassination was received with rapturous rejoicings by the populace, and was regretted by few beyond the circle of his own friends and adherents. The feeling of many people was well expressed by Sir Francis Nethersole in a letter to the Earl of Carlisle: 'The stone of offence being now removed by the hand of God, it is to be hoped that the King and his people will come to a perfect unity. There are infinitely more cheerful than sad faces of better degree.' As for Felton, he was raised immediately to the position of a popular hero. The sailors of the fleet besought the King 'to be good to John Felton,' and multitudes of people gathered round him as he was conveyed to the Tower, crying, 'The Lord comfort thee! The Lord be merciful to thee!' Verses were composed in his honour defending and extolling his deed. He was indeed no vulgar cut-throat, but belongs rather to the class of gloomy, fanatical spirits like Ravaillac, and Balthazar Gerard, who are impelled to assassination by a desire to benefit mankind. His own misfortunes and injuries no doubt influenced Felton to some extent; but he had been led to believe, from reading Dr. Eglesham's book accusing Buckingham of causing the deaths of the Marquis of Hamilton and James I, and the Remonstrance of the House of Commons, in which the Duke was

Reception of the news.

Felton's popularity.

Motives of Felton's crime.

[1] The best accounts of Buckingham's death are to be found in Sir Henry Wotton's Life, and a letter written by Dorchester to the Queen of Bohemia, S. P. Dom. cxiv. 20.

declared to be the source of all the grievances of England, that the removal of the hated minister was a public duty. In his hat a paper was found with the words, 'He is unworthy of the name of a gentleman or a soldier, in my opinion, that is afraid to sacrifice his life for the honour of God, his King, and country.' He was executed at Tyburn on November 29th, confessing sorrow for his crime.

Buckingham's funeral.

Charles was overwhelmed by grief for Buckingham's death, but was unable to secure for the man he had loved so faithfully anything but a sham funeral. In fear lest the people should insult the remains of the hated Duke, his body was buried secretly in the chapel of Henry the Seventh at Westminster, and when the ceremony of the following day was gone through, troops were present ready to prevent any disorders. No English minister, Castlereagh alone excepted, has been followed to the grave by such manifestations of national hatred.

His character.

The character of the Duke of Buckingham is not a difficult psychological problem, nor is it possible for very different conclusions to be drawn from the evidence which recent researches have made accessible. As a man, there was much that was attractive and loveable in Buckingham—extreme good-nature, courteous bearing to great and lowly alike, frank disposition, and an almost complete absence of all that is mean and sordid. Living during the time of the first Stuarts, it is no slight praise that Buckingham forbore to become the pensioner of foreign ambassadors, or, like his predecessor Somerset, a mere broker of offices and honours. Whatever abuses were connected with the system of favouritism, he was liberal to a fault in money matters, and never sank so low as to employ the opportunities of his position in accumulating wealth. Although no favourite was ever more jealous of opposition to his will, or more determined to remove from his path every obstacle to his schemes, Buckingham was generous and merciful to fallen enemies. He bore no malice against the Suffolk faction who endeavoured to supplant him at Court, and forgave his bitter opponent Yelverton, who had threatened him with the fate of Hugh Despenser, the heavy fine imposed by the Lords. His faults were rather the result of his sudden and unprecedented rise from genteel obscurity to the height of power and rank, than of any inherent viciousness of character. Like most other favourites, he was vain, impetuous, often arrogant, and occasionally insolent, even to King James; impatient of control and almost inaccessible to the advice of friends. To say that his morals were dissolute is only to state that he breathed the tainted atmosphere of the Court of James I, beyond all doubt the most coarsely licentious in English annals. His infidelities were innumerable and notorious. Neither the age of the Countess of Olivares nor the exalted rank of Anne of Austria restrained the handsome Englishman from adding them to the list of his conquests. It must have needed something more than mere graces of person and charms of manner to reconcile the decorous and exemplary

Prince of Wales to his companion's immorality of life. The secret of Buckingham's influence must be sought in the never-failing flow of spirits, the inexhaustible energy, the bravery and daring, the imaginative temperament and fertility of resource, which distinguished him.

His career as a statesman.

If Buckingham had never attempted to rise above the position of a court-favourite, he would probably have ranked not only as the most interesting, but also the least despicable of his class. He aspired, however, to rule a great nation at a critical period, and as a statesman he proved an absolute failure, and a curse to those who trusted him. Yet here again it has to be confessed that Buckingham was unfortunate. He was not devoid of ability; but he had had no experience, no training in politics, and was naturally led by the suddenness of his rise to power to over-estimate his own powers and to ignore difficulties and impossibilities. He was ever sanguine of success, in spite of repeated disasters, which he attributed to every cause except his own folly. His industry was great, his energy unbounded, his plans varied and far-reaching, but he lacked some of the most essential qualities of a statesman—a command of details, the faculty of organization, and the power of choosing fit instruments for his purposes. Above all, Buckingham had no definite policy. He was shifty and capricious, and taught foreign nations and his own countrymen to distrust him. He was blind, moreover, to the needs of his age, and had no appreciation of the great problems in religion and politics which pressed for solution. When all has been said that can be said in his defence, it still remains true, that the last royal favourite was the most incompetent minister England ever had.

OXFORD:

BY E. PICKARD HALL, M.A., AND J. H. STACY,

PRINTERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

DA
391
.1
B9S43

Shaw, William Hudson
George Villiers

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY